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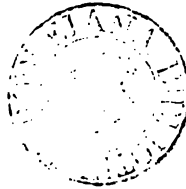


“SAVEZ-VOUS ce que c'est que de voyager en Russie ? Pour un esprit léger, c'est se nourrir d'illusions ; mais pour quiconque a les yeux ouverts et joint à un peu de puissance d'observation une humeur indépendante, c'est un travail continu, opiniâtre, et qui consiste à discerner péniblement à tout propos deux nations luttant dans une multitude. *Ces deux nations, c'est la Russie telle qu'elle est, et la Russie telle qu'on voudrait la montrer à l'Europe.*”—*La Russie en 1839*. Par le Marquis de CUSTINE. Tom. II., lettre xv., p. 117.

THE
RUSSIAN SHORES OF THE BLACK SEA

IN THE AUTUMN OF 1852

WITH A
VOYAGE DOWN THE VOLGA, AND A TOUR THROUGH
THE COUNTRY OF THE DON COSSACKS



BY
LAURENCE OLIPHANT

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WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS
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P R E F A C E.

It may seem singular that there is no country in Europe about which so little has been written, and about which, consequently, so little is known, as that vast empire of Russia, which absorbs in itself half the Continent, and which, from its extent and position, would seem to demand a principal share of the attention of those nations whose destinies it may one day control; and yet it is not very difficult to account for this, when the great difficulty of obtaining authentic information is considered.

The system of Government renders it impossible that any light should be thrown upon the present condition of the Empire from internal sources, while few strangers are tempted to extend their travels beyond St Petersburg or Moscow. It is not an inviting country to the dilettante tourist, for the accommodation is execrable—the means of locomotion barbarous—the obstacles thrown in the way by government annoying—and the results, with

respect to fine arts, literature, and social life, comparatively unworthy of his attention. Nor does Russia possess those charms for the more enterprising traveller which a new and unexplored country offers.

Since, then, the scanty information which the public already possesses has been of such a nature as to create an indifference towards acquiring more, I should have felt it necessary to offer some apology for publishing this volume, had not the events which have agitated Europe for the last six months induced me to suppose that an excuse is no longer needed for giving some account of those more remote provinces of the Empire of the Autocrat through which my travels led me. Upon my arrival at St Petersburg, circumstances induced me to change the plans I had originally entertained of visiting the rivers which run into the White Sea, for the purpose of salmon-fishing, and I have found no reason to regret the alteration in my route, since it furnished me with objects of interest of a more useful and solid description.

At a time when the power of Russia seems about to be tested, and its vast resources called into requisition, the shores of the Volga are invested with an increased importance, for Russian Tartary is the granary of the Empire.—If the Imperial forces are again to be matched with the armies of the West,

the country of the Don Cossacks possesses an especial claim upon our attention, for the soldiers which are levied from its boundless steppes occupy the most prominent position among Muscovite troops.—So long as the independence of Turkey is menaced by its insatiate neighbour, associations of the deepest significance attach to those provinces bordering upon the Black Sea which Russia has appropriated to herself within the last sixty years, and which compose a territory as extensive as all that remains in Europe of the ill-fated empire from which they have been plundered.

But though the prominence of a topic so engrossing as Russian aggression, at the present crisis, lends an immediate interest to everything which seems to have reference to it, there can be no doubt that any information upon the internal economy of the Empire is deserving of more general attention than has been hitherto accorded to it, since its importance must increase with the growing influence of Russia over the rest of Europe. Yet, while strongly impressed that a desire for a more extended knowledge of the subject would produce most beneficial effects, I am fully conscious of my own inability to create it. This must be my excuse for not venturing more frequently beyond the simple course of my narrative.

The claims which the once celebrated kingdom of Crim Tartary have upon our notice, however, rest upon other grounds than its political associations. I trust, therefore, that they may be more easily recognised ; and if I can succeed in giving some idea, however inadequate, of the magnificent scenery, romantic cities, and interesting inhabitants of the Crimea, I shall feel, at least, that I have offered the only tribute in my power to those charms which seem to have imposed this obligation upon me.

October 1853.

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CHAPTER I.

ST PETERSBURG—THE RAIL TO MOSCOW—RUSSIAN RAILROADS—
THEIR EXTENSION AND PROBABLE POLITICAL INFLUENCES—THE
KREMLIN—JOURNEY TO NIJNI NOVGOROD—ACCOMMODATION AT
THE FAIR.

ST PETERSBURG will amply repay the traveller for the expenditure of temper which, except in the case of a favoured few, will be the consequence of a visit to the Russian capital. Let him, therefore, cheerfully endure the delay of two hours at Cronstadt, just when the gilded domes and cupolas, which glitter at his journey's end, look most inviting—let him unhesitatingly plunge into the smoky cabin of the little

steamer, where a dozen mustached officials, seated in an atmosphere of stale tobacco, and overpowered by a sense of their own importance, are busily engaged in recording the private history of himself and his fellow-passengers ; nor should he grudge them an exaggerated estimate of the authority with which they are vested, or sneer at the pomposity with which they put their questions, or deem those inquiries impertinent, which are simply the result of a most laudable curiosity on the part of the government. He may be less disposed to make allowances for the severe torture to which he will be subjected at the custom-house ; but the consciousness of being in St Petersburg at last must compensate for this ; and after a few hours' delay, by dint of wholesale bribery, he will probably be released with half his baggage ; and then, if his stay in the metropolis is not to be a very long one, he should commence taking the steps necessary for his departure, almost before he can be said fairly to have entered the city ; for, having once put the government to so much trouble by coming there at all, he thenceforward becomes an object of its most tender care and solicitude—not that he ought ever to get tired of wandering along the spacious quays, or admiring the architectural beauties of St Petersburg while he rattles furiously over the execrable pavement, clinging to a frail drosky. Everything is new but the pavement and the droskies ; and if locomotion by the latter be not enjoyable, it has the merit of being,

in the first place, singular, from the manner in which the passenger seats himself across a cushion behind the driver ; and, secondly, exciting, from the extreme difficulty he finds in retaining his seat there, which is considerably increased when a wheel comes off—an incident of not unfrequent occurrence.

I found it impossible to see the lions of St Petersburg with any sort of composure : the consciousness of Moscow being attainable in twenty-two hours by railway ever disturbed me ; and thus it happened that I strolled discontentedly through the sumptuous halls of the Winter Palace, looked upon the Hermitage as a necessary evil, and was glad to find that one visit sufficed for the Izak's church. I can, perhaps, hardly be excused for this. Modern art has reared few edifices comparable with this cathedral, which no doubt owes some of its charm to a kind of barbaric character with which it is invested. Those lofty monoliths carry one back to a period of architecture long anterior to that of the Corinthian capitals with which they are crowned, when nations loved to perpetuate their greatness by monuments of a more lasting nature than do their more civilised posterity. To convey these gigantic masses of stone from the morasses of Finland, required a power almost as vast as that of which the evidences remain to this day in Egypt and Assyria. The rest of the building is Byzantine ; and the barbaric tinge thus given to it, only renders it all the more in keeping with the religion to which it is consecrated.

But even those visions of the Kremlin which had hitherto haunted me, vanished before the excitement of a grand field-day at Krasna Selo. Nearly a hundred thousand men were here reviewed by the Emperor. The enormous camp extended for many miles ; and on the vast plain beyond it, took place the sham fight which was to close the evolutions. From the heights above the plain we had a most magnificent view of the various manœuvres. Half of the army, consisting of upwards of forty thousand men, under General Count Rüdiger, engaged the other half under the Emperor, whose forces occupied the plain. Like a long silver thread, immense bodies of Circassian cavalry, their steel helmets and cuirasses glittering in the morning sun, came winding into the field. Soon after, the horse-artillery dashed over the heights, and we were nearly carried away by a charge of hussars, while vainly endeavouring to understand what was going on. The result was, that the Emperor's army retired behind the trenches near their camp, when a heavy cannonading ensued. The whole was rendered more interesting by the fact of each general being wholly ignorant of the tactics of his opponent ; and, though I understood afterwards that the board of umpires had given their verdict in favour of the Emperor, as an impartial spectator, and wholly unlearned in military matters, seeing his forces in full retreat, I naturally concluded that he had lost the day ; and so, perhaps, did Count Rüdiger.

I had an opportunity in the evening of meeting at

dinner some of the officers at the "English club," which, with the exception of three or four Englishmen, is composed entirely of Russians. Here they refreshed themselves, after the labours of the day, with porter and champagne mixed in large jugs; or played skittles—a most aristocratic game in the Muscovite capital, and one upon which immense sums are lost and won.

I was glad to find that my friend, to whose agreeable companionship throughout our travels I owe the beguilement of many a tedious hour, was as prepared as I to bid adieu to St Petersburg. We accordingly proceeded, bag and baggage, to *the* station of the Moscow Railway. Only one train starts daily; and the hour at which this most important event takes place is, or ought to be, eleven A.M. Travellers are commanded by the government to be at the station at ten precisely; and even then they are liable to be told that the train is full—as it is quite an unheard-of thing to put on an extra carriage for any number of passengers. Having arrived, therefore, at ten minutes before ten, to be quite sure of being in time, our luggage was seized by a soldier, policeman, or railway porter (for they all wear somewhat the same uniform), and carried in one direction, while we rushed in another to show our passport for Moscow, to procure which we had been to three different offices the day before. Here the description of our persons and our reasons for travelling, which it contained, being copied at full length, we were hurried

to another counter, where we got it stamped ; whence, catching sight of our baggage *en passant*, we sped on to the ticket office, and then, returning to our portmanteaux, went through a few formalities, which ended in receiving a ticket to add to the number of those with which our pockets were now pretty well filled. The anxiety of mind which such a variety of documents causes is not to be wondered at, when the consequences which the loss of any of them would entail are considered. Ladies in Russia do not think of trying to carry their tickets in their gloves. We now betook ourselves to the waiting-room, which we should have thought handsome had we not been detained in it so long that we got tired of admiring it.

For an hour did the destined occupants of the train sit patiently on the benches, every man with head uncovered—for even a skull-cap is an abomination to a Russian under a roof. Every one in military garb seemed to have the *entrée* to the platform, while the doors were rigorously shut against us unhappy civilians. At a quarter before eleven, however, they are opened—a general rush follows, and we are hurried through a barrier, the doors of which close behind us. Soon the whole barrier becomes thronged with people, waving their adieux as ardently as if we were booked for Australia. A bell, a whistle, and a sort of dull attempt at a scream, are, as in more civilised parts of the world, the signals for starting ; we leave the weeping eyes and waving pocket handkerchiefs behind us, and, in the course of ten minutes,

find, to our satisfaction, that we have increased our speed to fifteen miles an hour. We have hardly done so ere we arrive at a station. Everybody rushes out and lights a cigarette. We are to stop here ten minutes, and the people during that time walk up and down the platform and smoke ; then we huddle into our old places, and have time to look about us. The carriages are large. Nobody seems to go in the first class. A second-class carriage accommodates about fifty people. They are built as in Austria and America, with a passage in the centre, perambulated by a man in uniform, who occasionally asks people for their tickets. He seems to make the inquiry the first time to satisfy himself that you have got one, and afterwards merely as an amusement, which he apparently enjoys the more if he fancies you are going to sleep. The men are bearded and dirty, and relate stories in a loud tone of voice, for the benefit of the whole company, most of whom have evidently never been in a railway before. At every station the same scene ensues. The unsmoked ends of the last station's cigars, having been carefully preserved, are lighted afresh, and vehemently smoked on the platform during five or ten minutes, as the case may be.

The stations are all very spacious and uniformly constructed, with an immense domed building for engines, attached to each. Though there is only one passenger-train daily, there are three goods-trains, always well loaded with inland produce, tallow, fur,

tea, &c., or with cotton from St Petersburg to the interior. I should hardly think the line could possibly pay ; but as it is a government concern, nobody has any means of ascertaining this fact. Whether it pays or not, the railway traveller in Russia soon discovers that the requirements of trade are as little regarded by government as his own personal convenience ; for the restrictive policy of the empire must ever neutralise, in a great measure, the beneficial effects of rapid internal communication, while the difficulties which have always been placed in the way of free mercantile intercourse exist in full force, though the physical obstacles by which it has hitherto been encompassed are overcome. In fact, though the public cannot but be benefited by the formation of railroads throughout a country, it is hardly for the public benefit that railroads are constructed here. Russian railroads seem to be meant for Russian soldiers ; and it is the facility thus afforded of moving large bodies of men, that invests this mode of communication in Russia with an importance which does not attach to it in Great Britain, or perhaps any other country in Europe, to an equal extent.

When St Petersburg, Moscow, Odessa, and Warsaw become connected, Russia assumes an entirely new position with regard to the rest of Europe. A few days, instead of many months, will then suffice to concentrate the armies of the north and south upon the Austrian or Prussian frontiers. Through this same quarter of the world, many hundred years

ago, poured those barbaric hordes which overran civilised Europe ;—it would, indeed, be a singular testimony to the spirit of the age, if the next invaders made their descent by means of railroads.

It is not to be supposed, however, that railways in Russia are to effect no change whatever upon the commercial relations of the empire. It is certain not only that the civilising tendencies of railways will be felt here, but that the results will be all the more marked that the country which they intersect is rude and barbarous. At present, one of the most striking proofs of the primitive condition of trade in Russia is to be found in the existence of those numerous fairs which are annually celebrated all over the empire, and which are incidental to a country of such vast extent, such a scattered population, and so totally devoid of adequate means of internal communication.

That fairs in Russia perform the functions of large towns in other countries, seems apparent from the fact that the whole urban population of the empire is not more than five millions—only about double that of London. The ultimate result of an extensive system of railway communication would be the abolition of such remnants of barbarism ; as, with greater facilities of intercourse, trade would increase, and towns spring up ; markets would be in existence all the year round ; and roads not now thought of would become necessary, as lateral means of communication to and from the line. At the same time,

it is to be remarked that the absence of these very roads at present is a serious drawback to the success of railways in Russia.

It has undoubtedly been the traditionary policy of the empire to consider the commercial prosperity of the country as second in importance to the extension of its political influence. It is interesting to compare the probable results of this policy with that of England under somewhat similar circumstances, and to observe how different may be the effects produced by the introduction of railways in one country, from those which characterise their existence in another. The railways that traverse England in every direction, have not altered her political aspect with regard to the rest of Europe, except as they have affected and extended her commercial relations ; while the prosperity of the nation has increased to an unparalleled extent, by reason of the entire change which railway communication has wrought upon the mercantile transactions of the country. In Russia, on the other hand, the only important railway which has recently been completed, invests the empire with an interest which it never before possessed in the eyes of Europe ; and the formation of others now in progress, will mark the period at which the other Continental nations were first compelled to measure the political influence of this mighty empire by an altogether new standard. How long it will be ere Russia exerts an indirect influence upon the commercial relations of other countries by means of her railways, or even

works that great change upon her own social system already predicted, is a problem somewhat difficult of solution.

We completed our journey of four hundred and fifty miles in twenty-two hours.

The country throughout is tame and uninteresting. Now and then a picturesque wooden village is seen, but generally a sort of fir-scrub lines the railway. There are no tunnels, but some large rivers are crossed by bridges of considerable elevation. On arriving at Moscow, we were nearly torn to pieces by the *Isvoschiks* or *drosky* boys, who afterwards did their best to jolt us together again before arriving at Mr Pickersgill's hotel. After renovating ourselves there, we were in a condition to commence a survey of the town, and sallied forth to delight our eyes with the lovely and unique views from the Kremlin, and to explore the wonders of its far-famed precincts.

I was puzzled to decide which was the most striking—the prospect stretching before us as we stood upon the terrace under the shadow of the great bell, in which green roofs and tapering steeples, or gilded domes and star-spangled cupolas, met the eye on every side—while the river, spanned by two picturesque bridges, and covered with boats from distant provinces, flowed smoothly at our feet : or whether, whilst leaning against the parapet of the wooden bridge beneath, and gazing upwards at the confused mass of buildings enclosed by the quaint old turreted wall, I was not still more fascinated with that vast assemblage of

cathedrals and palaces. Here were the remnants of a barbaric age, which had escaped an almost universal destruction, mingled with the elaborate productions of modern art still unfinished, in style and architecture so strangely dissimilar, yet here placed side by side, while seeming to bear as much affinity to one another as the Taj and the Tuileries ; the whole, nevertheless, so happily grouped, that the combination, far from leaving any painful impression on the mind from its singularity, seemed absolutely necessary to the composition of a picture altogether unrivalled in its novelty.

Outside the walls, and forming a foreground, stands the Church of St Basil, well worthy its prominent position. If the buildings in the Kremlin be like Eastern temples and modern palaces, this is an edifice which can certainly lay claim to being unlike anything ever before produced in any part of the world. Its grotesque appearance and brilliant colouring at first sight would have rendered me insensible to that charm which I could not ultimately fail to perceive in the quaint irregularity of its buildings, while a certain solemnity of position and character pervaded the whole ; and at last it became my greatest favourite among the buildings which stand near, and seem in vain to rival it.

The interior of the Kremlin is worthy of attention no less than the exterior. The Church of the Assumption is one of the most fantastically ornamented even of Greek churches ; while the gorgeous

state-rooms in the palace, only completed within the last year, may safely be pronounced the handsomest in Europe. Passing with uncovered head through the Stass Vorota, or Gate of the Redeemer, where sentries are stationed to enforce the usual mark of respect due to the picture suspended in the archway, the traveller will soon become involved in an inextricable maze of streets ; but he will wander on, quite content to lose himself amid objects of such novel and varied interest.

One rainy day we took refuge in the covered passages of the Ryädi, an Eastern-looking bazaar, where the owners of gay open shops vociferously entreated us to inspect the strange assortment of wares thus ostentatiously exhibited, and seemed quite surprised at our resisting their pressing invitations to become purchasers of coloured wax-lights, glittering wedding crowns, or huge gaudy pictures of hard-favoured saints. Wearied with the incessant cry of Paschaltz, and finding that we ran a great chance of being drenched by the shower-baths which in places deluged these galleries, we adjourned to a famous tea-shop, where we were waited upon by the cleanest of waiters, soothed by fragrant tobacco, and regaled by the most delicious tea, in company with an immense number of bearded devotees of that beverage for which Russia is so justly famed. Here we were first initiated into the orthodox way of drinking it with a slice of lemon as a substitute for milk.

Though the droskies and pavements of Moscow

are, if possible, more execrable than those of St Petersburg, and the streets far less handsome, the city itself is much more interesting than the modern metropolis. We determined, therefore, after visiting the great fair at Nijni Novgorod, to return here and explore at our leisure those attractive scenes in which we had already revelled; a design which the facilities offered by steam of descending the Volga induced us afterwards to abandon.

The journey from Moscow to Nijni occupies two days and two nights, and is performed in a comfortable roomy diligence. The road is a *chaussée* macadamised, evidently warranted to last for ever. Notwithstanding its general excellence, it proved treacherous in one or two places. I say *it* in order to avoid accusing the government of having left sundry sloughs with apparently the express intention of disturbing the slumbers of unfortunate travellers. Upon our becoming firmly imbedded in one of these about two in the morning, we felt our indignation rise with every vain attempt to extricate the large vehicle. Nor was it much appeased by the midnight tramp through the mud which our mishap entailed. Fortunately some return post-horses came up, on which we laid violent hands; and by dint of expending an amount of caresses and oaths which a Russian driver could alone lavish, and which Russian horses could alone appreciate, we succeeded in dragging our ponderous conveyance out of the hole. We were too sleepy on the

following night to care about a wheel coming off, which delayed us for two hours. The country all the way is undulating, and the road, upon the old Roman principle, preserves an undeviating course, utterly regardless of hills and ravines. We passed through whole seas of oats and buckwheat—then over tracts of pasture, on which were scattered large herds of cattle, and through which meandered considerable streams—and finally plunged into a vast expanse of pine forest, thence again to emerge upon fresh fields, arrive at fresh post-houses, and get fresh horses. The process of changing horses generally lasts about half an hour, which, when one considers the complexity of the arrangement by which they are attached to the carriage, does not seem an immoderately long time. In the post-house excellent tea is always to be procured, and a strong flavour of garlic must generally be endured while drinking it.

During the continuance of the great fair of Nijui Novgorod there is no lack of traffic along this road; and at one station I counted no fewer than seven carriages, each having four horses: these, which look more like large rats, are harnessed four abreast, and hunted along by loud cries from the bearded Yamschik. They have extraordinary powers of endurance, and one team took us twenty-six miles in four hours, without appearing distressed.

Every eight or ten miles we rattled through a wooden village, the houses all standing detached at some little distance from the road, and highly

ornamented—the picturesque church with its green cupolas occupying the centre. Still there is little to vary the monotony of the road ; and it was with no small satisfaction that, on the forty-seventh hour after leaving Moscow, we saw the white walls of Nijni on a distant hill, while its golden domes glittered brightly in the first ray of sunshine we had rejoiced in for nearly a week. Shortly afterwards we were galloping over the sandy island on which the annual fair takes place, desolate for the greater part of the year, but now teeming with a vast and varied population, inhabiting the temporary dwellings which our heavy vehicle seemed to shake as it rumbled past.

We were set down at an office, in the midst of a confused mass of merchandise, people, and droskies.

Our first object was to disentangle ourselves from the crowd ; our next, to find some sort of accommodation. Securing three droskies, we dashed up and down the winding streets, looking in vain for some place that was not a shop or warehouse. At least half of the dense multitude through which we passed must have lived nowhere ; they were certainly dirty enough to warrant the suspicion that the lanes and alleys formed their only resting-place. Being unable to speak a word of the language, our Isvoschiks did not in the least seem to understand the object of our search. It was to them a most unusual thing that anybody who came to Nijni should wish to go to an inn, and

they probably expected us to pull up at some unoccupied corner, and, spreading out the contents of our portmanteaux, extemporise a shop in the mud, with a view to the immediate realisation of profit.

At last we found a kind German merchant, who directed us to a more substantial part of the town, where we obtained possession of a small dirty room, in which, worn out with fatigue, we were glad to spread ourselves and our baggage. Here our ears were dinned by three of the loudest bells that ever called pious worshippers to church, our noses assailed by the foulest odours that ever a Russian even could imagine, and our skins tortured by more innumerable hosts of fleas than the combined experiences of Eastern travellers ever recounted ; but yet, as we afterwards discovered, few could boast of better quarters than ourselves at the grand fair of Nijni Novgorod.



CHAPTER II.

THE GREAT FAIR OF NIJNI NOVGOROD—A RUSSIAN'S EXPERIENCE AT
GREENWICH FAIR AND THE CRYSTAL PALACE—RIVER SHIPPING—
THE BRIDGE OF BOATS—COSTUMES—THE CHINESE QUARTER—
COMMERCIAL ADVANTAGES OF THE FAIR—ITS TRADE AND INTER-
NAL ECONOMY—STREET SCENES—ADORATION OF THE VIRGIN—
VIEW FROM THE KREMLIN.

THERE are so many different meanings attached to the word *fair*, and the purposes for which people assemble together at what they designate by this term are occasionally so very different, that those who have only visited the fairs of their own country can have no just conception of the divers means which other nations employ in their celebration ; and, therefore, before beginning to describe the sensations which, as an Englishman, I experienced at a Russian fair, it seems right to speculate upon what the probable feelings of a Russian would be on visiting what have been called fairs in our own country.

Let us suppose, for instance, that, on a rumour reaching Nijni, in the early part of the year 1851, of the preparations being made for the celebration of the World's Fair in Hyde Park, an inhabitant of that town, considering himself rather a judge of

fairs, had intimated to the government his desire to visit England. Let us further suppose that, having obtained the necessary permission, he has reached London about the beginning of May; he would there observe a large proportion of a certain class of the population transferring themselves by means of steamboat and railway to a steep grassy hill on the banks of the Thames; and if, impelled by a stranger's curiosity to become acquainted with the manners and customs of the people among whom he is, he followed in the wake of this extensive emigration, upon arriving at the aforesaid hill, he would find himself struggling with a crowd of a very miscellaneous description. At one moment he is jostled by a respectable middle-aged couple, who are straining every nerve to reach a distant platform, allured thither by a brass band, and some young ladies in tights, who flutter before the crowd for a few moments, and then disappear, followed by a multitude eager to see the show, a representation of which waves gracefully over the brass band. At another, he is requested to take a penny peep at the sun through a telescope, or wearied with pressing solicitations to take shots with sticks at distant toys, disposed in the form of a druidical circle, for the small charge of a halfpenny each. In short, wandering, stunned and stupefied, amid shows, tents, and booths, he gazes with bewilderment at the noisy excited throng and their various occupations, apparently so insane, wondering if these are the evidences

of English civilisation ; and as he sees gentlemen deliberately engage partners for the purpose of rolling down the hill, he may perhaps regret that the barbarism of his education prevents his duly appreciating this amusement. He will perceive, by the peculiar costume and dialect of many of the men, that they belong to distinct tribes ; and he may afterwards discover that the Cockney is a native of the city of London ; while the swell-mob are a nomadic race, living a careless life, with indistinct ideas as to the rights of property, like the Calmucks of his own country. Proof of this, more personal than pleasant, will not be wanting ; and he will hurry back to London, crushed, bewildered, and robbed, there to be told that his misfortunes are a necessary consequence of an inexperienced visit to Greenwich Fair ; and so, when soon afterwards he hears that the World's Fair—for the purpose of seeing which he has undertaken so long a journey—is to commence, he congratulates himself upon his recently acquired experience ; and, with a firm resolve of braving British eccentricities to the utmost, he buttons up his empty pockets, with the air of a man prepared for the worst, and fights his way to the Crystal Palace. But a very different scene from what he expected awaits him there ; for, as he enters the fairy-like structure, and, surrounded by the noblest of the land, is an eyewitness of a ceremony rendered as imposing as the pomp of royalty could make it, he is overcome by a display which

owes much of its effect to the circumstances under which it takes place ; for never before has he seen collected under one roof, and that a glass one, the representatives of every country, as well as specimens of their arts and manufactures.

When at last he bids adieu to the wonders of the Exhibition, and, while journeying back to the steppes of Russia, contrasts these different scenes, the English seem to him a people more and more incomprehensible ; and he wonders which, in his own country, would be esteemed the most unnatural—that the great fair of his native town should be opened by the Emperor and nobility in *propriis personis*, or that those tribes who had come from distant lands should occupy themselves with throwing sticks at toys, or rolling in pairs down the steep hill that overhangs the Volga.

But when he reaches his destination, and forms one of the busy throng at this the third fair he has witnessed in as many months, all these varied scenes will rise up in review before him ; and he may moralise, perchance, on the pervading spirit of each,—may recognise, in the noisy multitude at Greenwich, the love of pleasure as the prevailing object ; in the vast European assemblage at the Crystal Palace, the nobler desire for instruction predominant ; while the more engrossing pursuit of gain is all-powerful to attract from distant quarters the motley groups at Nijni.

To us, as strangers, the earnest, business-like

appearance of the people was especially striking. There was evidently no time to be lost in merry-go-rounds or penny shows. Here fortunes were to be lost or won in a few short weeks. The rich merchant had brought valuable wares from distant lands at an enormous expense ; the poor pedlar had trudged many a weary mile with his heavy pack : both had staked their all on the results of their transactions in the allotted time, and were in no humour to trifle with it. It had evidently never struck them that Nijni fair was a place to which people would resort either for pleasure or instruction, or for anything but gold ; and certainly, interesting though it was, some such motive as the last would be required to induce a second visit. The fair is held on a low sandy spot of land, formed by the junction of the Oka and the Volga, and which is subject to constant inundation in winter. The substantial part of it, inhabited by the wealthy merchants, is arranged in twelve parallel streets, composed of neat two-storied brick houses, the lower part forming the shops and warehouses, which are protected by covered verandahs. Each street terminates at one end in a pagoda, indicating the Chinese quarter : while at the other it is connected with a square, where the governor's house and public offices are situated.

This respectable nucleus is encompassed by a deep border of temporary wooden huts, inhabited by an indescribable swarm of ragged Tartars, Tchouvasses, Kirghees, and Calmucks, besides the peasantry of the

neighbourhood, who frequent the fair with provisions, fruit, and all sorts of farm and country produce. A long bridge of boats across the Oka connects this busy peninsula with the hill on which is situated the town of Nijni, commanding an extensive view of the whole scene. Both rivers are covered with every conceivable shape and description of boat and barge ; some from the distant Caspian, laden with ironware, Persian shawls, Georgian carpets, and Bukharian skins, or dried fruits : these vessels, of square, unwieldy construction, are elaborately painted and ornamented, and on their decks are erected curious wooden habitations, from the peaked roofs of which flutter gaudy flags, while out of the carved windows peep Eastern maidens. Others, rude and strongly built, have come down the Kama with Siberian iron or tea ; while the more civilised appearance of a few denotes their Western origin, and these have threaded their way from the shores of the Baltic, laden with the manufactured goods of Europe. On board this singular mixture of craft is found as singular a mixture of inhabitants, whole families coming from their distant homes to take some share in what—now that the Exhibition exists no longer in that capacity—may resume its old title of the World's Fair.

Our abode was situated in a suburb on the opposite side of the river, so that it was necessary to cross the bridge of boats every time we wished to visit the fair ; and here the confusion was always the

greatest. We were obliged to struggle our way, if on foot, amidst sheepskins, greasy enough to scent us for the rest of our lives, thereby adding to the store of fleas with which we had started from our lodging. Women, with waists immediately under their throats, and petticoats tucked up to their knees, tramped it gallantly through the mud, and made better progress than we could. A Cossack on horseback rode up and down the bridge for the purpose of keeping order amid the droskies, which, heedless of the rules of the road, dashed in every direction, apparently bent upon splashing those they did not run over. Drunken men continually stumbled against us ; and when at last we reached the slough on the opposite side, the confusion and hubbub were greater than ever. The mud in the shallowest parts was at least two feet in depth, and nearly everybody waded about in it with Russian leather jack-boots. Numbers of small shops surrounded the bespattered populace, while a few miserable attempts at shows only proved how little they were appreciated. At the corners of the streets running into this delectable hole were stationed Cossacks, who showered blows upon offending Mujiks or peasants with their heavy-lashed whips, without regard to the nature of the offence or the size of the victim. Turning up one of these streets, and penetrating farther into the fair, other scenes and pleasanter forms meet the eye. The gay dress of the Georgian forms a pleasing contrast to the everlasting sheepskin : and, as we enter the shop of the Tiflis

merchant, beautifully embroidered slippers, rich table-covers, and the finest silks are spread out temptingly before us ; and it is fortunate for our pockets that we have a steppe journey in prospect, and the vision of sundry custom-houses afterwards. In the next shop are handsome furs and skins piled in every available corner, and the owner of the valuable collection stands at the door, his flowing robe and dignified demeanour betokening his Eastern origin. Aaron was, in fact, a Bukharian Jew, who delighted to show us his costly wares, even though there was no chance of our becoming purchasers ; and, finally, regaled us with almonds, split peas, and raisins—flattered, perhaps, by the admiration we expressed at the belt he wore, the buckle of which, composed of solid silver, was set with turquoises. But it would be hopeless to attempt a description of the costumes of the different merchants and shopkeepers, or to enumerate the variety of articles exposed for sale.

The Bukharians, Persians, and Georgians inhabit one quarter, which is likely to prove the most interesting to the stranger ; and I recognised in the countenances of many of the representatives of these nations, a strong resemblance to some old Affghan and Persian horse-dealing friends. It is a convenient arrangement, no less for the sight-seer than the merchant, that the fair is divided into quarters, devoted to the sale of different merchandise. The Ketaiski Red, or Chinese division, is at once distinguishable by the rows of square leather boxes which contain

the tea. No Chinaman, however, displayed his pig-tail in the crowd, much to our disappointment, the transfer being made at Kiahta, whence the tea comes overland to the Kama, down which river it is conveyed to the Volga. In the cutler's quarter I was surprised to find so great a preponderance of Russian ware ; still Sheffield maintains its own, and the prices are much lower than in St Petersburg ; indeed this is the case with all English or foreign goods, which, though subject to a most exorbitant duty on entering Russia, may be procured more cheaply here, on account of the comparative facility with which they can be exposed for sale. The Guild dues at St Petersburg are so high, that the merchant, after paying 3000 rubles for his position in the first Guild, and 2000 or 3000 rubles more for his shop on the Neuski Prospect, has but little margin left for his profits.

The whole system seems most elaborately devised to destroy all enterprise, and to depress as much as possible the spirit of trade, in a country which naturally possesses it in but a very limited degree ; and it must be long ere the resources of the country can be properly developed while the government seeks its own aggrandisement regardless of the prosperity of the community, since the protection it affords to home manufactures, by the duty on foreign goods, is effectually neutralised by the expenses attendant upon the sale and manufacture of the home produce itself. At Nijni, however, these difficulties do not exist ; the

only expense is house rent ; and thus it happens that foreign goods are to be procured more cheaply here than they can be at a seaport seven hundred miles nearer the country from whence they come ; and, in some instances, the manufactured articles of a Russian town some hundreds of miles distant, are to be found here exposed for sale at lower prices than in the very town where they have been produced—an anomaly which is quite in accordance with the political economy of the country. The palpable result of all this is, that the variety of goods brought to Nijni for sale far exceeds what it would be, were there not so many attendant advantages to counterbalance the expense of transport ; and the traveller has only to wander along the narrow, insignificant-looking streets of the fair, to find articles which he would be unable to obtain in the handsomest shops of St Petersburg and Moscow. He, therefore, owes the Russian government at least one debt of gratitude for procuring him a more extensive assortment of goods than he would find collected anywhere else in the same space.

The greatest quantity of raw produce comes from the East, either down the Kama or up the Volga. Besides tea from China, the barges down the former river bring quantities of Siberian iron, furs, and skins, together with curious-looking wooden boxes, covered with lacquered tin, which seemed to be in great request ; while madder, hides, dried fruits, Caucasian wines, and fish, are among a few of the

articles which come from the countries bordering on the Caspian. It was an endless source of interest to us Westerns to explore the Eastern quarter ; while, no doubt, our Western manufactures prove still more attractive to the ragged-looking Kirghees, or half-tamed Tartars. It is generally the case, where much business is done, that the most important transactions are negotiated in a quiet way ; and so at Nijni, a dirty little Frankfort Jew may be seen in the back shop of some dignified aristocratic-looking Armenian, true to his vocation and calling, driving his bargain as keenly as if he had one of his own persuasion to haggle with. All distinctions of rank are forgotten in that more engrossing pursuit which attracts people so many thousands of miles, and through so many difficulties. Here persons of the most opposite persuasions fraternise with the greatest harmony, and form pleasing contrasts to the eye of him who comes only to be a passive spectator of the novel scene : should he even venture on a purchase, he is comforted by the consideration that he is being cheated by a dealer, perhaps, from the frontiers of China. As there is little or no duty on Eastern produce, it can be procured here at a proportionably lower rate than any European manufactures.

Those articles of commerce to which most attention seemed directed—and which form, indeed, the main features of the fair to a stranger's eye—were teas and furs from the East, and cotton goods from the West. England supplies the great quantity of

indigo which is annually sold here, and used extensively as a dye throughout Russia. The governor's house, to which is attached the police-office, is a large well-built edifice: the whole of the lower storey is devoted to commercial purposes, and forms a most Eastern-looking bazaar, quite in keeping with the shawls and carpets here tastefully arranged for sale. These handsome shops, a fashionable coffeehouse, and a military band every afternoon, always drew together a large concourse of idlers, who found the covered piazza an agreeable lounge. To this coffeehouse we were obliged daily to resort, since no Russian inn is expected to provide food for its inmates; and here, surrounded by merchants and traders from almost every country under heaven, we made sundry nondescript repasts, our ears regaled the while by two harps and a fiddle. Once we tried a purely Armenian eating-house; but though both the company and dishes were national, and unlike anything we had seen or eaten before, we were not tempted to repeat the visit.

When evening came, and, worn out with the fatigue and excitement of the day, we would bestride a rickety drosky, and rattle towards the bridge we had traversed in the morning, a somewhat similar scene to that then displayed was enacted. Now we were buried in mud, splashed from neighbouring droskies—now almost jostled from our precarious perch—or so jammed amid other vehicles, that I frequently found a horse's head resting on my shoulder.

We were, therefore, thankful at last to reach our gaunt comfortless-looking mansion, and take what rest therein the fleas would allow us. The windows of our small ill-furnished bedroom looked out upon the bustling street which connected the fair with the town, and the want of comfort in-doors was in some measure compensated for by the street scenes which we occasionally witnessed. Now and then a grandee with a lumbering vehicle, to which six or eight horses were attached, rolled heavily past ; or the light private drosky conveyed the business man to his mercantile avocations.

Just opposite to us, in a small niche near a chapel, hung a picture of the Virgin, and it was amusing to watch the amount of devotion which each passer-by thought it necessary to bestow. The most devout passengers were old women, who never failed to make long and repeated reverences before the holy picture. The next most scrupulous class were the Mujiks, who, with beards as greasy and ragged as their sheepskins, blocked up the way for a quarter of an hour at a time, bowing reverentially to the ground, throwing back their long tangled locks every time they crossed themselves, and evidently feeling deeply the necessity and importance of the ceremonies they were performing. After them came the young women, who seldom passed without a sort of nod, either as an acknowledgment of the respect due, or because they thought it wiser to be on the safe side in case of accidents ; at any rate, they did not feel called upon

to linger among Mujiks or old women, to go through a ceremony by no means becoming. Next in order came the priests, who paid as little veneration to the picture as decency would permit—perhaps because they had better at home. Of the remaining crowds that daily passed the chapel, few did more than take off their hats, and the more respectable part of the population took no notice of it whatever.

The terrace on the summit of the hill overhanging the Volga, on which the town of Nijni is situated, commands a most singular and interesting view of the fair and the two rivers, upon which a swarm of human beings seems to have hived, whose dwellings, aquatic and terrestrial, cover both land and water for a considerable distance. Immediately below us was the crowded bridge of boats ; while from the tops of hundreds of masts, on each side of it, fluttered vanes, and often gay-coloured flags. At the junction of the Oka and Volga were warehouses and primitive-looking temporary wharves, near which, however, were six or eight business-like steamers and loaded barges ; on the low flat beyond, one hundred and fifty thousand people, crowded into the smallest possible space, ply their avocations. This human hive is only in existence six weeks in the year, during which time it is visited by upwards of three hundred thousand people.

The town of Nijni is interesting, chiefly from its position on the brow of an abrupt hill, in a country where hills of any sort are scarce, and from its con-

taining a genuine old Kremlin, and a few handsome churches. The hill is composed of soft clay soil, which has been run into gullies and ravines, rugged and abrupt enough to give a wild character to the scene; while the thick wood which clothes the steep banks, and from which pretty cottages peep out, softens it into one of great beauty.

As the sun set warmly upon it, and cast a pleasant genial glow over the hill-side, we were glad to have our backs turned upon the noise and turmoil of the fair, to which the calm still scene before us formed so strong a contrast; and we thought that peaceful Nijni could surely have nothing in common with the bustling scene below, and must long for the day when the unsightly excrescence should disappear, and leave it to enjoy its quiet beauty undisturbed.



CHAPTER III.

VOLGA STEAM-TUGS—OFFICIAL DESPOTISM—A FORAGE PARTY—PERI-CARTES—DANGEROUS COLLISION—RUSSIAN STEAM-COMPANIES—THE SAMSON — ITS CREW, ACCOMMODATION, AND DOMESTIC ARRANGEMENTS — THE BANKS OF THE VOLGA — AN ADVENTURE WITH THE INHABITANTS OF MAZA—THE CORN TRADE—A MID-NIGHT GLIMPSE OF THE TCHOUVASSES.

We had spent five days at Nijni, had learnt the fair by heart, and explored the old town with its romantic cliffs and wooded dells ; and it was, therefore, with no small satisfaction, that we embarked on board the Volga Steam Navigation Company's steam-tug "Samson," bound for Astrakhan, which ought to have left some days before, but had never managed to effect a start. The passenger-boats down the Volga do not go further than Kazan, and the steamers going beyond that place are mere tugs, not carrying cargo themselves, but generally towing two or three heavily-laden barges down the river, and starting as soon as possible after these are ready. As their departure is entirely dependent upon the police, it is impossible to say when the officials in that department may think fit to give up the necessary papers. None of

these gentry receive more pay than is sufficient to keep them in cigars, and their subsistence in a great measure depends upon what they can levy from the public by direct taxation ; consequently, as nobody can predict the exact day on which all the clerks will consider themselves adequately bribed, there can be no fixed time for the departure of the steamers.

In consequence of the purely commercial character of the traffic of these boats, passengers are obliged to lay in their own stock of provisions for the voyage—a most arduous undertaking for people who could not speak a word of the language. We found it impossible to procure a servant at Nijni who knew any other language than Russian, and were, therefore, obliged to make our purchases of the necessaries of life by signs. Finally, we became very expert in driving a bargain, by means of wooden beads strung upon parallel wires, and fastened into a square frame. With these originally-constructed tables a Russian shopkeeper performs the most elaborate calculations with the greatest rapidity ; and though rather perplexing at first, we found them very useful and convenient indicators of sums, which it would have been hopeless to attempt expressing in any other way.

As Nijni shopkeepers do not send articles purchased to the dwelling of the buyer, we were employed for the greater part of the day preceding our embarkation in rushing through the muddy

streets in droskies, with packages of bread, meat, and potatoes under our arms ; for a drosky is not meant to carry anything but a man, and would certainly not be considered capable of doing that anywhere but in Russia. These we finally stowed away in a sumptuous cabin ; for, being the only passengers, we were put in exclusive possession of the afterpart of the ship, and took up our quarters on board, as being more comfortable than those we had vacated on shore. It was a pleasant change, and we enjoyed the soft evening as we lay surrounded by hosts of quaint shipping. We had not calculated, however, upon spending it in the dark, and were much dismayed on being told that no lights were allowed on board the craft in the river. As we had put off our dinner until a fashionable hour, we were guided chiefly by instinct during that meal, and afterwards were fain to wrap ourselves in our plaids, and, stretched on a capacious mattress, soon became independent of light or darkness.

Our delays seemed never ending ; for though, upon the following day, the papers arrived, we were obliged to wait until the barges had floated themselves over the first shallows—a feat we had no sooner seen them accomplish in safety, than it was rumoured that the second engineer was nowhere to be found, but that he was probably locked up in the station-house. However, the anchor was weighed without further delay, and we glided gently past Nijni, which looked more beautiful than ever. After

rounding the peninsula on which it is situated, we came upon a lovely nook, where the monastery of Pietcherskie, almost hidden in a thickly-wooded glen, appeared an enviable retreat from the cares of the world. A straggling village, picturesquely built of rough logs, nestled along the base of the cliffs, here about 200 feet high, and completed a more charming prospect than I had supposed the Volga capable of affording.

Here the first barge awaited us, heavily laden with Siberian iron and Western manufactures for the Astrakhan and Persian markets. Having taken her in tow, we proceeded prosperously, till a sudden jerk startled us ; and scarcely had we discovered that our vessel was hard and fast on a sand-bank, before the barge, which had considerable way on her from the speed at which we had been going, scraped rapidly past, and the tow-rope, getting foul, swept over our deck, carrying away some of the funnel stays, and creating much confusion. There is great danger to unwary loungers on deck when such occurrences take place. A mere touch from the end of the tow-rope as it sweeps along would certainly break a leg, if it did no greater damage ; and the whole thing is so sudden, that occasionally there is great difficulty in getting out of the way. Upon the last voyage a man had been knocked overboard and drowned, under similar circumstances. Immediately on the steamer touching the ground, those on board the barge should have let go the anchor. Through

some clumsiness this was not done, and the consequences might have been serious. As it was, another detention for two or three hours was the only annoyance which resulted from the accident.

This was a fitting time and place to become enlightened upon the subject of *pericartes*, a word I had never heard before I experienced this practical demonstration of its meaning. During the next three weeks, *pericartes* formed the most engrossing topics of conversation, while they afforded us admirable opportunities of exercising all our spare philosophy. Of all the navigable rivers of Europe, there is probably none so uncertain and difficult of navigation as the Volga. Seldom very deep, the channel is in many places devious, and, as the bed is composed of loose sand, is ever changing. These shallows are called *pericartes*; and as they occur very frequently, either the barges or the steamer were constantly running aground. Those immediately below Nijni are esteemed some of the worst on the river, and numerous craft are generally to be seen hopelessly imbedded in them.

At last our boat floated off, but it was only to drop anchor once more, and wait for the missing engineer. While gazing wistfully down the stream, in the direction we seemed destined never to go, I was once more aroused by a sudden crash, and found that another barge had fairly run into us, toppling over and staving in a quantity of casks she had on board, and very nearly breaking our rudder. I was standing

near the tiller chains at the time, and as they suddenly jerked round, my leg was caught, and jammed against the side of the vessel, thus affording me personal experience of the risk attendant upon this sort of concussion. Fortunately the buttons of my boot gave way, and I had the satisfaction of seeing it severely crushed instead of my foot, which was just pulled out in time—not, however, without receiving a warning squeeze. The barge had suffered more than we had, and all hands were employed stuffing tow into a large hole in her side. After having progressed only fourteen versts, we anchored for the night, as (the channels being so intricate) it is always out of the question to proceed after dark.

Notwithstanding the difficulties attendant upon the navigation of the Volga, there are upwards of thirty steamers plying upon it. The two principal companies are—the Volga Steam Navigation Company, of which the managers and many of the shareholders are English ; and the Mercury, a purely Russian company, which is managed, or rather very much mismanaged, by Russians.

Perhaps the most serious impediment to the successful prosecution of commercial enterprise in Russia, is the impossibility of finding *employés* upon whose honesty any reliance can be placed. All Russians are so much in the habit of cheating their government, that they are unable to divest themselves of this propensity where the pockets of private

individuals are concerned. Nor do rank or station offer any guarantee, since greater responsibilities only afford greater facilities for successful speculation. The experiences of the Volga Steam Company amusingly illustrate the truth of this. It was found that while the affairs of the company were managed by some Russian gentlemen resident at Nijni, there was a heavy annual loss ; and, notwithstanding the certain prospect of remuneration which the speculation had originally held out, it became apparent that, unless an entire change took place in the circumstances of the Volga Steam Company, that respectable association would soon be inevitably bankrupt. Some Englishmen were consequently deputed to inquire into a state of matters so extremely unsatisfactory. They at once discovered that a system of wholesale robbery had been practised by the agents, to such an extent that the deficiencies were easily accounted for. Among other ingenious contrivances resorted to for appropriating the company's funds, the most highly approved was that of sharing the demurrage obtained by the owners of cargo upon those barges which were detained beyond a certain time upon their voyage. It was easily arranged between the merchants, the captains of the steam-tugs, and the managers at Nijni, that these delays should frequently occur ; and as the amount of demurrage was regulated by the length of their duration, the company was mulcted of large sums, and these worthy associates divided the spoil. Since

then the affairs of the company are managed by Englishmen, who are rapidly making up the losses sustained under the Russian administration.

During the months of May and June, boats ply between Astrakhan and Rhybinski, beyond Yaroslaf, and barges then make their way on to Tver, whence the goods can either be forwarded by water to St Petersburg, or transferred to the railway, and conveyed by it to that city or to Moscow. The navigation of the river generally closes about the end of October ; and, during the winter, the whole river as far as the Caspian is frozen over. The boats, meanwhile, are laid up at Kriusky, near Simbirsk, and other convenient places.

The Volga Company owns twelve or fifteen steamers, all employed as tugs, and none drawing more than five feet of water. The "Samson" was a powerful boat, with excellent accommodation ; our cabin being most comfortably fitted up, and measuring twenty feet by twelve. In fact, the only doubtful point which can arise, as regards the passengers, is on the question of provisions. As much as possible should be laid in before starting, few articles being procurable at the wood stations. However, with the exercise of a little judicious domestic arrangement, we managed to fare very well. The traveller will probably have become accustomed to Russian diet before he gets as far as the Volga, and consequently will not be very particular.

On the following morning we made fast our second

barge, on the deck of which were erected a number of cabins, occupied by sixty or seventy merchants and travellers returning from the fair ; and, with these two cumbrous attendants, we pursued our course down the river, under a brighter sun, and more favourable auspices altogether, than we had started with from Nijni the day before. The late incidents had so fully occupied our thoughts, that hitherto I had found time to make but few observations on the company with whom the next two or three weeks were to be spent. The captain was the primary consideration, a most good-natured, warm-hearted Dutchman—presenting an agreeable contrast to the boors by whom he was surrounded. Secondly, there was a loquacious mate, who said he had been to Kamschatka, and gave me a great deal of interesting information upon Russian North America ; but the captain silyly hinted that his voyages had been limited to the Mediterranean and the Baltic. There were four stalwart pilots, with large red beards, round fur caps, and sheepskin coats, between whom and the captain differences of opinion were not unfrequent ; and there were the crew, with loose trousers tucked into huge jack-boots, and red shirts fluttering outside—thus reversing the usual arrangement of those garments. This is, indeed, the costume of the Mujik generally. Lastly, there was a shrivelled old woman, who acted as a sort of housekeeper to the captain, and cook to the passengers.

The right bank of the river, with the exception

of a few miles before arriving at Vasil Soursk, varies in height from one hundred to three hundred feet ; in some places it almost seems to overhang the river, while steep ravines intersect it in every direction ; but more frequently it swells gently back, clothed to the summit with fine trees ; while up some picturesque glen the wooden houses cluster, and the green cupolas of the village church peep forth, contrasting agreeably with the opposite shore, as it stretches away, tame, flat, and uninteresting. The river itself varies from one to two miles in breadth, and occasionally the stream is very rapid. About ninety versts from Nijni, and almost upon the water's edge, stands the monastery of Mackarief, facing a noble reach of the river. It is shaded by some beautiful trees, and, as seen from the steamer, appears a spacious pile. A wall, flanked by four round towers, encloses two churches and some smaller buildings. At the town of the same name, not far distant, the fair used to be held, which was afterwards transferred to Nijni.

On the opposite bank, a large wooden village seems to adhere to the side of the steep hill. Long flights of wooden stairs descend from the houses to the water's edge, where quantities of boats are lying. Higher up, the white stems of the birch trees shine amongst the others, with a singular and pleasing effect.

A few versts after leaving Mackarief, we arrived at our first wood station, and made fast under a steep bank, on which were piled large stacks of birch logs.

Loading with wood is an operation which usually occupies six or seven hours. If the annoyance of coal-dust is unbearable, the noise involved in the process of *wooding* is no less so. It is, moreover, of such frequent occurrence, that it proves almost as serious a source of delay as do the pericartes. Every two days our hold was filled, and all the available corners above deck, as well as below, were piled with wood. In forty-eight hours, every stick had vanished in the most marvellous manner; and it was always a matter of wonder to me how the furnaces had managed to consume so vast a store in so short a time.

A verst or so from the river bank, and situated in a pine wood, lay the secluded little village of Maza. We astonished the unsophisticated inhabitants by our sudden appearance among them, and forthwith numbers of girls trooped down to the steamer with long sticks, on which to carry the wood they were to put on board. Passing up the little street, I watched the process of construction of one of the log-houses I had so frequently admired, and observed the peasants stuff moss into the interstices, which, while it no doubt added materially to the comfort of the dwelling, gave it a rough, unfinished look, to which the extremely elaborate carving on the overhanging gable-end formed an odd contrast. Altogether, these are not unlike Tyrolese houses; and the one which, to judge from its highly decorated state, I concluded to be the residence of the village chief, or "Starista,"

might fairly challenge a comparison with the picturesque habitation of Andreas Hofer.

Strolling along the outskirts of the village, armed with our sketch-books, we came upon a charming view, which only required a distant peep of the Volga to make it perfect. This desirable object would have been easily attained, had some friendly hillock or tree been near to afford us the requisite altitude. For lack of such convenience, my friend and I determined to mount an outhouse, most temptingly situated; and by means of a high paling we easily reached the thatched roof, up which we scrambled, at the risk of falling through upon the cows, or whatever else our shed might have contained. Having attained the ridge pole, we were rewarded by the prospect of a fine bend of the river, stretching away bright and glistening. While thus engrossed, I was aroused by voices, and on looking down, we found ourselves, not unnaturally, the objects of interest to a small group of men, who seemed engaged in discussing the wonderful phenomenon above them, of two human-looking beings, attired in unknown costumes, destitute alike of sheepskins and of beards, most mysteriously employed. To judge from the deferential manner in which one, bolder than the others, addressed us, he supposed at least that we were spirits in shooting-jackets, who, descending from some brighter world to visit oppressed serfs, had found their first resting-place on the roof of the little shed they were so unconcernedly bestrid-

ing. We answered an unintelligible inquiry he addressed to us, by pointing to the river, and enunciating the word "Volga," as being the only one common to us both, thereby meaning him to infer what our real purpose had been, but probably only inducing the belief that we had been summoned from the vasty deep, rather than from the clouds above, to take notes of what was transpiring in "Maza." After some consultation among themselves, and ineffectual attempts at communication, they gradually dispersed, leaving us to ascribe their forbearance to a superstition which forbade them to do more than gaze reverentially, or to their confirmed habits of submission, which prevented them from taking the summary measures that our uncereemonious intrusion would doubtless have provoked in any other part of the civilised world.

In walking back to the steamer, we put up a double snipe, a bird peculiar to this part of the world, and which only makes its appearance during a month in autumn, if the frost does not set in too early. It was a lovely evening. A reach of the river, ten miles long and nearly two broad, stretched away before us, brightly reflecting the setting sun, which threw a ruddy glow upon the steep-wooded bank opposite, and tinged the white sails of two or three country craft that were working their way gently up the stream. The melodious chant of the boatmen floated to us across the waters, as with measured tramp they warped them to their anchors,

mingled with shouts of shrill laughter that proceeded from many bare-legged maidens, who were noisily engaged carrying the wood on board our steamer, a task which seemed to afford them no little amusement. Each peal that burst from that youthful throng, as it rang through the clear, still air, told of a happy unconsciousness of that state of servitude by which they were depressed, and which had evidently produced its effect upon those whose monotonous strains were so full of mournful meaning.

As I watched the progress of the singular-looking barques, thus almost insensibly propelled up the stream, it seemed a wonder how they could ever reach their destination; or how it should be possible, considering the number of men required, and the length of the voyage, that there could ever be any remuneration upon so bulky a cargo as wheat. The following information, which I obtained respecting these very boats, in some measure solved the difficulty: they were carrying wheat from Samara to Rhybinski, and the voyage between these two places, under the most favourable circumstances, occupies at least two months. The season would then be too far advanced to admit of any farther progress, and consequently the wheat remains stored at Rhybinski until the spring. As soon as the water communication is again open, it is re-shipped, and probably reaches St Petersburg towards the end of summer. Sometimes an early winter and contrary winds will retard the boats for a whole

season, thus making the wheat two years old ere it arrives at its destination. A large "Rechievah"—for this is the native name of the vessel—contains 20,000 poods, or about 320 tons. The complement is in the proportion of four men to a thousand poods. No less than eighty would therefore be employed in a rechievah of this size, and the pay of each man is ten silver rubles, or thirty-three shillings and sixpence a-month. The price of wheat per pood at Samara is thirty-five copeks—at St Petersburg, sixty.

Occasionally horses are employed instead of men, and then seven or eight boats are lashed, one behind the other, to the immense barge which contains the horses; and the whole looks like some gigantic river monster working its way up the stream. On the deck of the leading barge a covered stage is erected, which serves as a stable sometimes to as many as a hundred and fifty horses. These may be observed working the huge capstan by which the boat is warped, and round which they perambulate, as in a threshing-machine. As many men as horses inhabit this floating establishment, and boats are continually employed carrying anchors ahead, and sounding the channels. With this cumbersome and expensive contrivance, however, not more than fifteen or twenty versts are made in a day, and the voyage to Rhybinski occupies about six months. The amount of cargo which such a train of barges would convey, is about 300,000 poods, or about 4700 tons. On one occasion we calculated the whole length of the train

must have been at least half-a-mile. Some idea of the size of these boats may be formed from the fact of our passenger-barge being 320 feet long, and capable of containing 200 passengers. They are of a construction totally different from *rechievahs*, and are called "Pashaliks."

We passed the scene of a recent catastrophe which had happened to one of these horse-machines, in which four barges and all the horses had been burnt. It is ridiculous to suppose that these barbarously contrived horse-machines can much longer compete with the steamers, when the advantages which these latter afford are considered. At a very small increase of freight, one steamer can convey 200,000 poods of wheat to Rhybinski in twenty-three days, where the cargo is at once transhipped for St Petersburg, and arrives there in three weeks.

Not being a party interested, a *Rechievah* was to me always a pleasing object, with its elaborately-carved triangular stern, and spacious deck that projected like a stage over each bow, on which a sort of wooden pedestal, also painted, and sometimes decorated with flags, was erected. Here, six or eight feet above the deck, stood a booted and sheepskinned figure leaning upon the long tiller, and able, from his elevation, to see how he could most easily run into everything that came in his way, much to the detriment of a pair of huge eyes that were often painted on the square-bow, and probably proved of as much use as those of anybody else on board. One enor-

mous square sail, together with the eighty men, were the propelling forces of the more than usually ornamented *rechievah* I was inspecting.

The weather continued lovely, and the scenery on the right bank was often beautiful. Where, however, the banks are low on both sides, the want of beauty is generally compensated for by some highly interesting *pericarte* which is to be traversed, and the excitement becomes considerable as we approach the shallows with our long unwieldy train. Two men with long poles are engaged in melodiously sounding, and "*piatt polovinai*" (five and a-half), "*schiest*" (six), are ominous words to the ears of the captain, who instantly seizes a red speaking-trumpet nearly as long as himself, alternately waving it and speaking through it to the barges, on board of which everybody seems frantically engaged in doing something, which probably ends in the largest barge leaving the right channel, and suddenly grounding. Upon this, a great bustle ensues on board the steamer, and the tow-rope creaks and jams in every possible direction, always seeming bent upon doing somebody damage, in which it very nearly succeeded two or three times. The steamer goes half-speed, stops, backs, stops again, and allows the pilot an opportunity of crossing himself vehemently. To all this bustle a perfect lull succeeds. The barge that is not aground leaves her companion to her fate, and drops composedly down the stream. We wait for an hour to think about the position of matters in

general, and then turn our head, and anchor just above the barge in distress. The captain goes on board, while we contemplate her for another hour, without doing anything in particular, during which time she becomes more firmly imbedded than ever. Then follow a series of most complicated manœuvres, the result of which is, that after eight or ten hours of continual tugging at all quarters, we get her off, and, picking up the other barge, proceed on our way to the next pericarte, where the same scene occurs, with variations. On one occasion the tow-rope broke, and the end of it striking our cabin window on deck, stove it in bodily, the smashed glass flying in every direction. I had fortunately just quitted my chair close to it ; but my friend, who was a little farther off, was slightly cut.

Upon the evening of the fourth day after leaving Nijni—during which we experienced a delay of eight hours on a pericarte—we arrived at our second wood station. The bank of the river on which it stood was low and marshy, and the night air struck cold and aguish ; so we remained below, grumbling at the incessant thumping overhead, as the wood was thrown heavily on the deck with a violence that rendered any attempt at sleep out of the question. In despair I abandoned the cabin, and at once found reason to be thankful for the annoyance which had driven me on deck to witness one of the most singular scenes imaginable ; it was some moments before I could really believe myself not only awake, but in Russia.

Men and women, whose dress and features were totally unlike any I had before seen in the country, were engaged in carrying wood on board. If the captain had rubbed some magic ring, he could not have conjured from the nether regions more orthodox-looking slaves ; and had we been on the shores of the Tigris, such an event would have been most natural ; but whence these beings had sprung, on that bleak desolate bank of the Volga, was indeed mysterious. The dress of men and women was the same. A white tunic, fitting close at the neck and wrists, reached to the knees. The legs were swathed in black cloth and felt, and their shoes made of the bark of trees matted together. The men wore high black hats, tapering to the middle, but wide at the top and bottom, like an hour-glass. The dark locks of the women hung in tangled masses over their shoulders, or in a long plait behind, among which glittered gold coins ; while from their necks were suspended large silver breastplates, about eight inches long and six broad, also formed of coins. Half-a-dozen huge fires of birch logs threw a bright glare upon their wild costumes and swarthy countenances, as they sped swiftly up and down with their loads.

The Tchouvasses (for to that tribe belonged these strange-looking beings) are said to be a mixture of the Mongolian and Finnish races ; and certainly the result fully evidences the singular compound. I thought, however, that the Tartar blood predominated in their composition, and did not see, in any one in-

stance, the flaxen hair and blue eyes of the Finlander. Some Finnish words are said to exist still in their language, however. I could gain but little information concerning them at the time ; but in looking over old John Bell of Antermony, I find he says—“ The Tchouvasses have a tradition among them that, in former times, they had a book of religion, but, as nobody could read it, a cow came and swallowed it. They pay great veneration to a bull. From whence they come is unknown ; but, from their complexion, it is probable they are from Asia. They live by agriculture, and seem to be an inoffensive kind of people. Their huntsmen offer in sacrifice, to some deity, the first creature they catch ; hence some curious men have imagined these people part of the ten tribes of the Jews expelled by Shalmanezzer. I advance this only as a conjecture, which every reader may follow or not as he pleases.” I have since obtained additional information concerning some of their religious opinions and ceremonies. When a Tchouvasse wishes to marry, he commissions a friend to bargain for a wife. They are to be met with of all prices, from fifty to two hundred and fifty rubles ; but most of them bring a portion nearly equal to the purchase-money. When the bride is conducted to her husband's house, she remains for a short time concealed behind a partition ; she then makes her appearance, and, in a modest, serious manner, walks three times round the company. At the last turn, the husband snatches off her veil and salutes her.

From that moment she becomes his wife, and receives the cap, which is the distinctive dignity of a married woman. When bedtime approaches, she is obliged to draw off her husband's boots. Her servitude then commences.

The Tchouvasses have no idols. Thor is the name of the supreme being, and Thor Amysch, the mother of the gods, is his wife. Their priests are called Zemmas. They are nearly allied in manners and customs to the Scheremisses, another tribe of Finnish and Tartar origin, and inhabiting the same part of the country. These differ from the Tchouvasses in the names of their divinities, but seem to agree with them in thinking that there is a father and mother of gods, and a devil, whom they call by the Arabic name of "Chaitan." Besides these, there are the Mordvin and Votiak tribes, all more or less allied to one another, but widely differing in language and religion. While subject to the Tartar, these were wandering tribes; but since their annexation to Russia, they have given up their nomadic habits, and settled down quietly in the government of Kazan.

It was scarcely a matter of regret to me that I only obtained a midnight glimpse of the Tchouvasses. To have beheld them dwelling like ordinary mortals in a village, or sharing the common destiny of mankind by tilling the ground, would have been a dreadful shock to one's romantic system. I wished much to obtain one of those mysterious shields worn by the women, as a memento of this

singular race; but the attempt which I made to inspect one was so vehemently resented by the fair damsel whose bosom it adorned, that I was obliged to relinquish all hope of being able to do more than carry away the vivid recollection, which long after haunted me, of that moonlit scene.



Tchouvassé Peasants at a Wood Station



Kremlin of Kazan.

CHAPTER IV.

KAZAN—ITS EXTERNAL ASPECT AND INTERNAL ACCOMMODATIONS—
STRIKING VIEW FROM THE KREMLIN—A TARTAR VILLAGE—A
PASSAGE FROM THE HISTORY OF ITS INHABITANTS—STERLET
FISHING—THE KAMA—INLAND NAVIGATION OF THE EMPIRE.

WE were now in the once famous Tartar kingdom of Kazan. The Sura, a small river flowing into the Volga from the southward, was formerly the eastern boundary of the Russian empire, and now it separates the province of Kazan from that of Nijni Novgorod. At the confluence of the two rivers, the town of Vasil Soursk is picturesquely situated, where the remains of a fortress, erected by the celebrated Prince Ivan Vasiley, are said still to be visible, reminding the Tartars of their former independence, which had

called it into existence. As we approached Kazan, the banks gradually lost their thickly-wooded character, and assumed the appearance of well-cultivated gently swelling knolls, the villages succeeding more frequently. Our voyage was, on the whole, prosperous, although upon one occasion we again remained for nine hours on a pericarte. The disappointment occasioned by this delay was in some measure compensated by the magnificent view of the reach, which we had thus time to admire at our leisure. I could have supposed this vast expanse of water to be a lake, had not the curling eddies betrayed its real character. The water of the Volga looks muddy, but its appearance belies it, and we found it clear and delicious. The last few days had been very hot, while the nights were cold, the thermometer frequently standing at 52° in our cabin before breakfast, and rising at mid-day to 72°.

We were within 25 versts (20 miles) of Kazan, when a doubt seemed to arise in the mind of the captain as to the expediency of stopping there at all, and I began to fear that our arguments to induce him to allow us a few hours to visit that interesting city would prove unavailing, when a friendly pericarte settled the matter, and he most good-naturedly gave us his boat, enabling us thereby to take advantage of a fair wind, and the few hours yet remaining of a glorious day. Leaving the old Samson tugging hopelessly at her barges, we glided swiftly in our tiny craft past gorgeous rechievahs and unwieldy horse-machines, now overshadowed by lofty trees or wooded

banks, now skimming near some sandy islet, while our sailors beguiled the way with Russian ditties.

The town of Kazan, which, as we approached, seemed built upon the water's edge, is really situated at a distance of seven versts from the river; and as the whole intervening country is flooded for a great part of the year, the road thither is a mere temporary track across a marshy irregular piece of ground, and the drosky-drivers, who are their own engineers, naturally choose the most impracticable line.

Upon arriving at the few huts which serve as the summer port, we found that the only vehicles to be procured were some telègas, or native carts—decidedly the most primitive of all modes of conveyance extant, consisting simply of a flat framework of bark placed between four wheels. The mate mounted with us on one of these, our legs dangling over the sides; and we hoped that our number would in some measure insure our safety, as we might in any case of emergency cling to one another. Where rapidity and wholesome exercise are the objects desired, I should decidedly prefer a telèga to all other modes of conveyance; as, by means of a few admonitory taps on the back of the Tartar driver, the speed may be increased to any amount; while the jolting is so excessive, that a walk of double the distance would be far less fatiguing. Wherever the horse can go, the telèga is bound to follow, and does so in the most matter-of-fact manner.

As we approached the town, and crossed a piece of smooth ground, I was enabled to let go my hold, and

bestow upon it some of the attention I had hitherto been devoting exclusively to my vehicle ; and certainly the scene which now presented itself was well worthy of undivided admiration.

Situated on a gentle eminence, in the midst of an extensive plain, its many-coloured roofs rising one above another to the walls of the Kremlin, which crowns the hill to the extreme left, tall spires and domes appearing in every direction, and betokening the magnitude of the city, while adding to its beauty, Kazan presented a more imposing aspect than any town I had seen in Russia, and seemed to vie with Moscow as to exhibiting, in the most favourable manner, the characteristic buildings of the country. Twilight was just failing us as we entered the broad deserted streets, and reached the principal hotel, where we secured rooms, and then sallied forth to see as much as we could by lamp-light. Had we known a little more of Russian civilisation, we might have spared ourselves the trouble ; but I innocently supposed that, in a town containing fifty thousand inhabitants, the streets would be lighted up, and could hardly believe, on finding myself in the principal thoroughfare, that we were in a city of the living. As we walked its whole length, not a gleam from a window, far less a street lamp, cheered us. Three or four foot-passengers, and one or two droskies—the only moving things—seemed hurrying noiselessly home along the wooden pavement, as if ashamed of being out after dark ; so we disconsolately did the

same, and returned to our dismal rambling hotel, which was quite in character with everything else. Though this was the principal place of the sort in the city, sheets were a luxury unknown, and I was glad to stretch myself on a hard wooden frame, which harboured every species of irritating insect. For this pallet, and the dirty room in which it stood, the charge was a ruble—three shillings and fourpence !

We had determined not to leave Kazan without exploring it ; and as the captain had warned us to be at the port at an early hour on the following morning, we were up at daybreak, and on our way to the Kremlin by four o'clock. We passed a number of houses which had been recently burnt down ; indeed, the town seemed to have suffered from fire in all directions. The Kazansky, or main street, traverses the entire ridge of the hill ; and from the corners of the various intersecting streets, good views are obtained over the town upon each side. Following along it, past handsome well-built mansions, and through the colonnade of a large bazaar, or Gastinni Dvor, we reached the Kremlin, and, from the terrace in front of the governor's house, revelled in a most glorious prospect. Stretching away to the north, the eye ranged over a vast expanse of country, thinly dotted with villages and church spires ; whilst our position commanded a panoramic view of the town, which in no way belied my impressions of the previous evening. To the south, the Volga, with its steep banks, bounded the prospect, while the Tartar

villages in the foreground, with their singularly built mosques, seemed to invite a visit. The effect of the scene was completed by the sun most opportunely rising, as it were, out of the steppe, tipping spire and dome, until we ourselves felt its genial influence.

The Kremlin contains three churches, each with the usual complement of green cupolas, two towers containing bells, and two more containing windows only. In one of these towers is a curious archway which has a striking effect when seen from the plain beneath, but seems to be built for no discoverable object beyond that of ornament or singularity. Altogether the Kremlin looks better from without than from within ; and the sooner an immense range of yellow government-buildings which it contains is burnt down, the better. The exteriors of many of the churches are handsome ; and I observed, for the first time in Russia, numerous fresco-paintings on the walls. There is a large university at the end of the Kazansky ; and parallel to it are some gardens, which would afford a pleasant promenade to the inhabitants if they ever walked ; but, to judge from the weedy beds, they are not much patronised. In fact, nothing could be more solemnly dreary, and, consequently, more genuinely Russian, than Kazan. The absence of vivacity in the street, characteristic of all the large towns of the country, was here painfully apparent ; and it was impossible not to feel depressed, were it only from sympathy with everything else. Comfort seemed sacrificed for effect, and

the desolate aspect of the interior of the city contrasted harshly with the gorgeousness of its brightly coloured roofs and innumerable churches, as seen from a distance. Kazan was to me the first of a series of disappointments, and I gradually learned to avoid entering those cities whose brilliant exteriors promised most, if I wished to preserve a favourable impression of them.

Nothing bears looking into in Russia, from a metropolis to a police-office : in either case, a slight acquaintanceship is sufficient ; and first impressions should never be dispelled by a too minute inspection. No statement should be questioned, however preposterous, where the credit of the country is involved ; and no assertion relied upon, even though it be a gratuitous piece of information—such as, that there is a diligence to the next town, or an inn in the next street. There is a singular difficulty in getting at the truth, probably originating with subordinate officials, whose duty it seems to be to deceive you, and whose support is derived from bribes which you give them for their information. Whatever may be the cause, the effect certainly is, that a most mysterious secrecy pervades everything ; and an anxious desire is always visible to produce an impression totally at variance with the real state of the case : and so it happened that, not having been long enough in Russia to have learned this, I was disappointed with Kazan.

But looking less theoretically at those handsome

churches and silent streets, and regarding them rather as tangible bricks and mortar than as emblems of the state of Russia, their air of dulness may easily be accounted for, by the plan of concentrating all the shops in the town into one market-place, or *Gastinni Dvor*, which, while it may be more convenient for those making purchases, detracts most materially from the life and bustle of the place. A main street devoid of a single shop, or any side pavement, must necessarily have a dull appearance; and the gaunt houses, with all the shutters closed to keep out the glare, contribute to its melancholy. Yet Kazan has advantages which few other inland towns possess. The capital of an ancient kingdom, it is not the mere creation of government, kept alive, as it were, by law, and tenanted by compulsion; it rests upon foundations long since laid, and owes its present prosperity to its position, on the great highway from Siberia to Moscow and Nijni. It thus becomes an emporium for



Leather Gloves of Kazan manufacture and
Wooden Spoon

the productions of that distant part of the empire which pass through it. It boasts, moreover, manufactures peculiar to itself. The inhabitants are well known to excel in leather embroidery—for workmanship of this sort Kazan is celebrated

all over eastern Europe. It is therefore too highly favoured to be a fair specimen of a Russian town ; and I appreciated it more correctly after visiting some of the other provincial towns on the Volga. The magnificence of the horses which stand harnessed in every common drosky, bear testimony to that skill in the science of horse-flesh, which formed a great national characteristic of their former possessors, but to which the Russian can lay no claim. Most of the *Isvoschiks*, or drosky-drivers, were Tartars ; and it was quite a pleasure to dash along the streets in their well-appointed vehicles. The Kazanese are very proud of their wood-pavement, and are most earnest in pointing out this mark of their civilisation. It certainly is a luxury, where the only alternative is the execrable *chaussée* of Russian cities generally.

Our former experience of the road to the port decided us to trust to our own legs, as a less expeditious, but safer and more agreeable mode of traversing it. Moreover, we could not resist a Tartar village, and a sketch or two *en route* ; and we found the fresh morning air most invigorating. Tall Tartar maidens, in graceful costumes, with gay-coloured shawls drawn over their heads, and partly concealing their faces, passed us on the road, carrying water or driving cows to pasture. As we approached, they considerably disclosed the charms which their head-dress was intended to conceal, thus affording an opportunity of observing how far superior they are in personal attractions to the damsels of the country.

of Mahomedanism are estimated more correctly in Russia than in many other countries ; and we were not sorry to see the arrogant pride of the faithful humbled. Though professing Mahomedan tenets, these Tartars did not seem to be very orthodox followers of the Prophet ; and the open manner in which the women exposed their countenances to view, would have scandalised true believers.

I might perhaps have ventured to enter one of their wooden houses, but that there was nothing tempting in their appearance ; or have satisfied my curiosity by looking in at the windows, had they not been composed of parchment. The Tartars of Kazan differ in every respect from the surrounding tribes, possessing neither the flat noses nor wide eyes which mark the Kirghees, Calmuck, and other Mongolian races, nor the flaxen hair and fair complexion of the Slave. According to Heberstein, the Russian notion is, that they are of Moabitish origin ; and certainly the classic mould of their features would appear to suggest a southern extraction. In the account which this celebrated diplomatist gives of these races, we find that King Bathi, in the year 1237, completely routed the Russian army, slew the Grand-Duke George, and laid the provinces of Vladimir and Muscovy under tribute. Bathi was succeeded by sundry princes who periodically overran the neighbouring countries ; and it was not till the early part of the fourteenth century that any successful resistance was offered to their arms by the famous Duke Ivan

Vasiley, who not only threw off the Tartar yoke, but in 1352 laid siege to the city of Kazan. He was opposed by King Scheale, who, in his turn, invaded the Russian provinces. The Tartar power was not, however, wholly crushed till Ivan the Terrible ascended the throne ; and about the middle of the sixteenth century this great Eastern kingdom was, to use a modern phrase, annexed to the empire of Russia.

We had lingered too long over Kazan and its environs, and arrived at the port just in time to see the three funnels of the *Samson* disappear behind a hill ; so, seating ourselves in our little skiff, surrounded by loaves of black bread and legs of mutton, we went in chase, with a fair wind and a strong current in our favour, trusting to some pericarte to befriend us. Of course the steamer, with most unusual good fortune, had escaped all such obstacles ; and not until we had perseveringly followed for five hours did we overtake her, anchored in mid-stream, helplessly looking at one of the barges aground on a sand-bank.

On our way, we had been occupied in admiring the fiery autumnal tints on the wooded hill-sides, and the many and bright hues with which the stunted copsewood was variegated ; in some places the banks were steep and scarped, a few dwarf oaks or wild rose-bushes being all that could find holding-ground, and large blocks of sandstone were strewn along the river's edge at the foot of the cliffs, which were often wild and romantic.

Nothing could exceed the magnificence of the Volga, as it stretched away like some inland sea, which the strong breeze, as it hurried us down its mighty stream, rippled into tiny waves. Numbers of little boats, each containing one man, were anchored in the river, the occupants engaged in fishing for sterlet. This delicate fish, peculiar to the rivers of the south of Russia, is much prized ; and deservedly so, for I thought it undoubtedly the best fresh-water fish I had ever eaten. The mode of fishing is simply with a cork attached to the line near the hook, which is suddenly jerked as the fish is playing near the cork.

We had now reached the Kama, the largest tributary to the Volga, into which it falls about fifty versts below Kazan. Until within a recent period, nothing more civilised than huge pine rafts floated on its broad bosom ; now, active little steamers ply diligently between Perm, Nijni, and Astrakhan, loaded with Siberian and Chinese produce. The voyage to Perm from Kazan occupies a week or ten days. The former place has, since the introduction of steamers, proved a formidable rival to Kazan as an eastern emporium, and is reported to be a rapidly increasing city. Its proximity to the gold mines has long rendered it a place of some importance.

It is much to be regretted that the difficulties attendant upon the formation of private steam-companies are so formidable, and the risk of interference so great, that a country possessing the most extensive

capabilities in the world of inland navigation is in great measure deprived of the advantages which could not fail to accrue to it, were a more enlightened system introduced. There is no doubt that a change is already taking place, in this respect, on the Volga—I understood that an Englishman, who is engaged at Nijni in putting together steamers, brought thither in separate pieces for the purpose, had launched four in the summer of 1851, and five the following year, for one company alone.

When we look at Perm on the map, and consider that there are steamers plying on the rivers of that distant province, we should, indeed, be almost American in our notions of progress did we require more; and we ought rather, perhaps, to congratulate Russia on having accomplished so much.



RUSSIAN STEAMSHIP ON THE VOLGA.

CHAPTER V.

ANOTHER WOOD STATION—SPIRITUAL AND TEMPORAL DESTITUTION
OF SERFS—AGRICULTURE—HAXTHAUSEN ON SERFDOM—EVILS OF
THE SYSTEM—ITS PRESENT WORKING—"OBROK"—SCARCITY OF
VILLAGES—ABSENCE OF AN URBAN POPULATION—ITS EFFECT
UPON AGRICULTURE—RUSSIAN NOTIONS OF POLITICAL ECONOMY.

ON the following day, as we were nearing the numerous stacks of birch-logs that betokened a wood station, we fell in with one of the company's steamers from Astrakhan. We were soon moored side by side under the sandy bank, and the captains retired to discuss grog and pericartes till the news of our arrival should bring the country people down to load.

Meantime we went on shore to explore, and had not gone far before we met all the inhabitants of the nearest village hastening to the scene of action. It was a grand holiday, and so the population had turned out *en masse*, which was rather fortunate, considering that two steamers were dependent on their exertions..

The country was flat, and covered with a rich alluvial soil, of which, for a wonder, some advantage was taken. The village, which was about two miles

from the river, was situated upon the banks of a small lake, and was as wild and uncouth as the inhabitants that issued from it.

It was a large irregular place, with the gable-ends, instead of the sides of the houses, facing the street, in true Russian fashion. There was an unwonted air of poverty pervading everything. The telègas at the cottage-doors seemed more rickety than usual. No elaborate carving indicated the residence of the Starista; no green-domed church was there, to make up in spiritual for what the inhabitants evidently lacked in temporal things. Squalid children dabbled in the muddy water of the lake, in much the same condition as the wheat which was growing on its opposite margin—the one as little likely to be cared for or properly cultivated as the other.

Here, in a country which boasts of the rapid advances it has recently made in civilisation, we saw a large and populous village in a state of utter heathenism, and apparently destined to remain so; though it is a question whether it might not be considered fortunate in having escaped the infliction of some profligate priest.

Even if the plea of being unable to cope with an immoral and debased priesthood could excuse the neglect which the absence of any place of worship implies on the part of the government, this very incapacity ought at least to act as a stimulus to the improvement of the intellectual condition of the people by means of secular instruction, thus and thus

them to acquire for themselves that information in spiritual as well as temporal concerns, of which they must otherwise remain destitute.

A very different view, however, is entertained by those in authority, all schools being positively prohibited, except in a few large towns ; a state of things which must seriously retard the due development of the resources of the country, composed as they are in an equal degree of moral and physical elements. Of the near relationship subsisting between these influences, we had a most convincing proof before us, when, on leaving the mudlarking little serfs to live and die in the state of ignorance provided for them, we crossed over to consider the no less hard case of the wheat, which was the more forcibly brought to our notice by a splendid bank of manure in close proximity, used for the purpose of forming a dam at the bottom of the lake. It is not often that manure is so well employed. As a general rule, it is all carried to the banks of the nearest river, and left to be washed away by the first flood ; but here it was turned to some account ; and not ten yards distant, some wheat waved sadly towards it, as if resigned to its fate in being the produce of a barbarous country. On the whole, however, the wheat promised to turn out better than the children ; for, depending on a rich soil, and genial summer weather, not upon an exacting master and unsympathising government, it was more highly favoured than they, although the manure was so tantalisingly near.

Here as elsewhere in Russia, owing to the great extent of arable land, the system of cultivating fields in alternate years prevails—it is only the most magnificent soil which could produce such fine crops. The whole cultivation consists in a slight scratching previous to sowing; and probably in no other part of the world are people so well rewarded by nature, considering their small acquaintance with, or study of her requirements.

It is a merciful provision that this is the case; for in no other country do the peasantry labour under similar disadvantages, and nowhere is less stimulus offered to the enterprise of the labouring man to induce him to overcome them. Notwithstanding the theory strenuously maintained by all Russians, that the system of serfdom is conducive to the improvement of agriculture, it appeared to me to act as a most effectual clog to any efforts that might otherwise be made by the poorer class towards the introduction of a better mode of cultivation. Their argument, in a condensed form, amounts to this, that in order to the progress of agriculture, there should exist, as at the present time, large properties in the hands of a wealthy aristocracy, possessing funds adequate for the development of the agricultural resources of the country. On this subject Haxthausen says *—“ If the existence of these large properties is absolutely necessary for the progress of

* See also *Der jetzige Zustand des V. Reichs, und die zu seiner Verbesserung Bedürfnisse*.

agriculture and of the national welfare, it follows, as a natural consequence, that serfdom cannot, at the present moment, be abolished." But it is difficult to see how this result should so naturally follow upon the existence of the large properties spoken of, seeing that, if the wages of the labourer were to come out of the proceeds of the estate, the probability is, that the proprietor would be far more careful to have it properly cultivated, than when, as under the present system, he is certain of being put to no expense regarding it; whilst also, as a general rule, forced labour is far more slovenly than paid work. The result of the prevailing state of things is indifference, not only on the part of the lord, but on the part of the serf, to whom is allotted a portion of land near the village, upon which he is expected to support himself by the crops which he rears when not working for his master.

As this land does not really belong to him, and has only fallen to his share in the usual course of allotment, he does not naturally feel the same interest in it as if it appertained to him and his heirs for ever; while the amount of labour frequently exacted by his master, precludes the possibility of his devoting adequate attention to it.

It thus happens that the lands of noble and peasant are equally ill cultivated, and likely to remain so, until a stern necessity shall force the one, and a prospect of remuneration shall entice the other, to adopt the more enlightened systems of other coun-

of the tax-gatherers, who usually double the amount for their own benefit.

Occasionally the services of the crown peasant are required by the state, and, in compensation for these, they receive orders upon the treasury, which are never cashed by the nobility who officiate as clerks in that department ; but, in remote districts, the peasants are not often called upon for this purpose, and seek to enrich themselves by obtaining employment in the towns, or vegetate upon plots of buckwheat, in ignorant barbarism and bliss.

Yet it must be said, in extenuation of the present condition of the inhabitants bordering on the Volga, that many of those who are owned by noblemen are under the system of “ Obrok,” which consists in the payment, by the serf, of a certain rent, for the privilege of working all the week on his own account.

As considerable traffic is springing up in many of the towns upon the banks of the river, the process of making money is becoming more common, and there is an unusual motive supplied for the exercise of the intellectual faculties ; still the pursuit of gain is not followed so keenly as might be, those peasants to whom noblemen have accorded their liberty being subject to an augmentation of their “ Obrok” proportionate to their prosperity—a consideration which must materially damp the ardour of speculation, and subdue any tendency to self-gratulation upon the successful issue of an adventure.

From the fact of the peasantry so readily deserting

appeared within short distances of one another, an interval of many miles now occasionally occurred without a trace of human habitation ; indeed, I do not remember ever having noticed even one *small* village. Not only do the Russian peasants positively object to living alone, but they prefer large communities, and a village seldom contains less than a thousand inhabitants ; the consequence of which is, that at harvest and seed-time the greater part of the population is obliged to move in a body to the more distant portion of the lands under cultivation, and bivouac there until their labours are terminated. For this most inconvenient mode of proceeding, the following remedy has been proposed. It being admitted that, once in every thirty years, the greater part of a Russian village is burnt down, it is suggested by the same writer (Haxthausen), that the government "should command all those inhabitants whose houses have been consumed, to rebuild their dwellings in a totally different situation, so that, in thirty years, the number of villages would thus be doubled or trebled." Whether this ingenious device would effect the desired end, is rather problematical ; at any rate, there seems to me to be a much more natural and self-evident remedy, which, by improving the present agricultural system of the country, would render it necessary for the population to distribute themselves more advantageously. It is clear that, if there were more large towns scattered throughout the country, agricultural produce would

it is obliged to slacken its steps, in order not to advance too rapidly the wants, the ideas, and the manners of the people." A most ingenious way of solving the problem, truly! Whatever else may be laid to the charge of the Russian government, to accuse it of being too rapidly progressive is, I think, basely to traduce its strictly conservative character. The peasantry have at present nothing to fear from go-ahead tendencies, and are perfectly able to keep pace with their rulers in the march of civilisation; and we have only to compare the condition of the more remote states of North America with these provinces, to perceive that the failure in the establishment of towns does not proceed from the inaptitude of the *peasant* for a town life, but of the *serf*. There is a considerable difference between a population of slaves, on the one hand, obliged to live in a town, devoid of any natural advantage of position, and dependent for its continued existence, as for its original creation, upon the whim of the government alone—and a population of free men, on the other, who collect together of their own accord, in a spot possessing all the requisites essential to their prosperity, and who, though small in numbers at first, go on increasing as external circumstances combine with their own industry to promote such augmentation. Of course the existence of any foreign market, which could be made available by means of increased facilities of internal communication, would be the most valuable stimulus to agricultural operations, and would render the improvement of transit a primary

and imperative duty upon the government ; but where the sea-coast is altogether unattainable, the more judicious distribution of the population seems to be that now proposed, as tending to promote both the civilisation and prosperity of the country.

It is hopeless to expect skilful artisans when a man is obliged to pay an annual rent proportionate to his earnings for permission to work at a trade. He naturally does not feel bound to perfect himself in a craft for the benefit of his owner, and would rather lead a comparatively independent life of promiscuous labour in the country, than be bound as a workman in the town.

Thus it happens that those who supply the inhabitants of the towns are the shoemakers, the blacksmiths, and the carpenters of the villages ; and, as may be imagined, their productions are of the roughest description.* Of course, so long as such a state of things exists, just so long will the towns of Russia maintain the cold lifeless aspect which distinguishes them at the present time. In contemplating their condition, a Privy-Councillor of the empire observes, that "if the industry of the villages is not favourable to the prosperity of the towns, it has, on the other hand, the advantage of preserving us for a long time from the Proletariat, that scourge of modern society, which contains within itself the seed of its own dissolution."—One of the most imaginary evils this, as applied to his own country, that ever harrowed, in anticipation, the benevolent feelings of a Russian statesman.

* The proportion of artisans to the rest of the population, by the statistical papers, is one in a hundred.



Samson passing through the Jigoulee

CHAPTER VI.

SIMBIRSK—STATUE TO KARAMIN—THE JIGOULEE—SAMARA—THE
GOVERNMENT OF ORENBURG—VOTARIES OF VODKA—GOVERN-
MENT SPIRIT-MONOPOLY—GRACE BEFORE MEAT.

A LITTLE fleet of rechievaks, some pashaliks and horse-machines, are lying under the steep bank, along the base of which wooden cottages and storehouses are plentifully scattered. There seems absolutely to be some business going forward; enough, at any rate, to suggest the proximity of a large town. From this commercial little village a broad track is visible straight up the hill-side; and so precipitous is the ascent, that the carts and people who traverse it appear to cling to the mountain as they climb up it. This original-looking road leads to Simbirsk, and the

craft lying at its port are probably loading with potash, the most considerable article of export in this province. I found it difficult to keep my seat on the plank, which, placed upon four wheels, was the mode of conveyance used to effect the difficult ascent. The wiry little Cossack horse, however—and he was the party principally concerned—seemed to think nothing of attaining an altitude of four hundred feet in about as many yards.

We entered the main street immediately on reaching Simbirsk. The mate of the steamer, who accompanied me, not thinking our vehicle sufficiently respectable, dismounted, whilst I joined my friend, who had preferred walking up, and we proceeded together to explore the town. For a place which is said to contain nearly twenty thousand inhabitants, Simbirsk wears a mean and insignificant appearance—its situation, indeed, being its only recommendation. From the terrace, near the governor's house, a magnificent and expansive view is obtained over the basin of the river, which here spreads itself in narrow channels over the low land, beyond which the high hills of the Jigoulee bound the prospect to the south, while in every other direction the steppes seem illimitable. Immediately at our feet were cottages and gardens, and on the opposite bank of the river some large villages. The white sails of many pashaliks glistened on the broad surface of the stream, and completed a charming picture.

Near this terrace, and in the centre of a square

from which the principal streets diverge, stands a statue of Karamsin, the celebrated Russian historian. There is an annual horse-fair held at Simbirsk ; but the town is not in so prosperous a condition as many others on the Volga from which corn is more largely exported. The suburbs seemed more than usually wretched, and the principal street more than usually dull. I found two or three German tradesmen, however, who seemed to be making the most of their superior intelligence, and gave a thriving account of themselves.

About twenty versts below Simbirsk we passed Kriusky, the winter station for the steamers of this company—possessing the advantage of an excellent harbour, in which vessels are safe from the melting ice in spring. Not far from the village rises Had-wallee, a picturesque hill, seven or eight hundred feet high, the greatest altitude which the banks have attained since leaving Nijni. Near Simbirsk they are bare, and covered with a short seared grass ; but as we entered the Jigoulee they became more thickly wooded, and we observed, for the first time, some dark-green pines intermingled with the autumn-tinted foliage, with which they pleasingly contrasted.

The Jigoulee is the opening—for it can hardly be called the gorge—by which the Volga forces its way through a range of considerable altitude. The river, which here takes a bend to the eastward a hundred and seventy versts long, encloses a mountainous peninsula, forming an isthmus only twelve versts

across. As this divergence afforded us the finest scenery which is to be met with on the Volga, we did not grudge the time spent in making it. For once, too, we had occasion to congratulate ourselves upon our captain's prudence, which never hazarded a stroke of the paddle-wheels after dark, and which now secured to us noble scenery for the morrow. He was no less satisfied with our successful run of a hundred and sixty versts from Simbirsk since the morning, together with the absence of all pericartes. Indeed, since the Kama had added its important contribution to the waters of the Volga, navigation had been comparatively free from difficulty.

At an early hour we were dashing, with a strong current, towards Samara. The stream, though nearly two miles broad, is here rapid and deep, and, for the first time, the left bank has totally changed its character: rising to a height of seven or eight hundred feet, its beetling crags overhang the river, and give an unusual boldness to the scene.

The opposite hills, though of equal if not greater height, swell gently back from the water's edge, or occasionally recede and form amphitheatres, in which villages, picturesquely situated, look as if they were completely cut off from the rest of the world. Not far from one of these, we observed a neat-looking boat moored, and near it a small white tent, close to which a curling wreath of blue smoke suggested the idea of a pic-nic, if the Russians are ever guilty of thus profaning the beauties of their river.

I discovered that these signs of comfort and civilisation proceeded from a party of soldiers, who constitute some of the river-guard. Until quite recently, robberies of boats were frequent in this romantic spot ; and three or four "highrivermen" have been known to batten down the hatches of a *rechievah*, containing a hundred and twenty men, rifle the cabin, and make their escape, before the astonished occupants could collect the senses or pluck up the courage they possessed.

Emerging from the *Jigoulee*, which had for a distance of seventy versts displayed its beauties, the better appreciated from being, in some measure, unexpected, we shortly after reached Samara, situated on a sloping bank, to which were moored numerous barges and *rechievahs*.

Samara is the busiest port on the Volga. Backed by an immense corn-growing country, it supplies a great part of the interior of Russia with wheat. No less than nine million poods are shipped here annually, and carried either down to Astrakhan, and so across the Caspian, or, on the backs of camels, from Orenburg to the adjacent countries ; or conveyed by water to St Petersburg.

It is evident that the introduction of steam must soon work its usual miracles even on these distant rivers. Samara was already beginning to feel its magical effects ; and what between a recent fire and the increasing trade, the streets seemed filled with scaffolds and ladders, while the chink of hammer and

chisel resounded in all quarters. Large, substantial, and often handsome-looking brick edifices were springing up everywhere. Whole streets were being laid out ; while along the water's edge numbers of wooden houses and sheds served as dwellings and stores for the nonce.

Samara contains from fifteen to twenty thousand inhabitants ; but it is too matter-of-fact and business-like a place to be at all attractive to the tourist ; and its unpicturesque appearance, as we approached, quite harmonised with its purely commercial character. This proves, notwithstanding, its redeeming feature for the short period during which the great annual fair is held here, when the numerous races assembled at it are said to be even more diversified than at Nijni. Only three hundred versts from the Asiatic frontier, a large trade is carried on with the inhabitants of those distant steppes, who flock hither in great numbers, the representatives of each tribe wearing a different costume. The rapid increase of the population of this town is but in accordance with the prospering condition of the government to which it mainly owes its existence. There is not a more highly favoured province in the empire of Russia than Orenburg ; and those inhabitants of the neighbouring districts who, belonging to the crown, have been allowed to migrate to this land of plenty, have done so to such an extent that the population has doubled itself within the last few years, and now exceeds a million and a half. Its

boundary extends to within a few versts of the left bank of the Volga ; and where that river, more capricious than usual, reaches the most easterly point of its whole course, Samara has sprung up ; and, forming a sort of port for the town of Orenburg, which is situated on the Tartar frontier, it helps to connect the distant regions beyond with the Cis-Volgan countries, and thus, as it were, completes the last link of the chain of European civilisation in this direction.

But apart from any topographical importance that Orenburg may possess, it is to the fertility of its soil that it chiefly owes its prosperity ; and of the cheapness of every article of food we had most satisfactory proof. We laid in a small stock of beef at three copeks, or a penny-farthing a pound, while a hundred eggs only cost us twenty copeks, or eightpence. The Vodka, or corn-brandy of the country, is here procured in great perfection, as we discovered by the condition of our pilots when we were ready to proceed on our voyage. Both these indispensable personages were lying thoroughly intoxicated in the forepart of the ship, and thus we were again to be delayed. Each day hitherto, since we left Nijni, had furnished some fresh excuse for our tardy progress ; and what the cause of the next stoppage was to be became quite an interesting subject of speculation with us. We owed our detention at Simbirsk to the captain's wife, resident there, who was far too pretty for us to grudge it to her ; and

now—however unsentimental the cause of our delay—we felt that there was no alternative but to smother our indignation and resign ourselves to our fate. My companion and myself were in the act of deriving some little consolation from an excellent dinner, to which our hospitable but somewhat peppery captain had invited us, when our feelings of animosity towards the pilots were most unexpectedly gratified. Suddenly, and in the midst of a warm recommendation of some elaborate Armenian dish, our worthy host sprang up and rushed upon deck. We heard a scuffle, and shortly afterwards saw the end of a very thick rope, flourished by the captain's sturdy arm, descend with no small force upon the shoulders of the pilot, whose turn it now was to smother his indignation, while he dexterously avoided the blows. Quite out of breath, our skipper returned, and informing us that his excitement had banished all remains of an appetite, he left us to finish our meal alone, which was only disturbed once again by a heavy, dull sound, caused, we discovered, by the body of the pilot, who had just been hurled from the upper deck by the still irate captain.

Congratulating ourselves, in the first place, upon being in a country where such proceedings are considered as matters of course ; and, in the second, on there being no more pericartes in prospect, which might enable a vindictive pilot to wreak his vengeance upon us, we soon had the further satisfaction of seeing Samara disappear behind the hills. I found

out afterwards, by the way, that it was a little premature in us to imagine that, because we were in Russia, the captain could handle our drunken pilots thus roughly ; it seems, on the contrary, that men, while in a state of intoxication, have, in this country, an especial claim upon the protection of the government, since the sums drawn from the monopoly of Vodka form an important item of the revenue. That there was a due appreciation of the obligation conferred by either party, I learned from a Russian gentleman, who told me that the police had strict orders not to take up any person found drunk in the streets. The numbers of tipsy men who reeled unnoticed about the large towns seemed living testimonies to the accuracy of this statement.

In excuse of these regulations, it may indeed be urged that the Russian peasant is so degraded, at any rate, that it amounts to much the same thing whether he be in a state of cultivated intoxication or natural incapacity.

But while every encouragement is given to an extensive and public consumption of the juice of the grape, the fragrant weed enjoys no such immunity ; far from it—a most determined war is waged against all smokers. A policeman will regard with complacency the besotted mujik, stumbling up against every passenger he meets ; but if perchance he detect the aroma of tobacco, or see the end of a cigar lighting up some dark dismal street, he pounces down upon the luckless wayfarer, who has trusted to the

shadows of night to conceal his unlawful act, and barbarously demands from him the sum of three rubles.

The mujiks certainly show themselves sensible of the consideration which prompts this exception in favour of their besetting vice, by behaving in a most inoffensive manner while under the influence of their potations ; nor, after they become sober, do they seem possessed with any other feelings than those of gratitude and self-satisfaction.

Our pilots, on the following day, were evidently amused at any hazy reminiscences which their bruises might suggest of the scenes at Samara, and the captain said that they never left the ship without a similar occurrence taking place. His invariable rule, therefore, was to prohibit their going on shore at all during the whole voyage ; but they had contrived on this occasion to elude his vigilance.

The other sailors seemed to be more steady and manageable, and whatever might be their habits on shore, they certainly lived most abstemiously on board ship. About five in the evening they used to assemble round two enormous basins full of boiled millet-seed and linseed oil, while to each mess was also assigned a large loaf of black bread, junks of which they dipped into this delectable compound, and very soon lapped it all up. Both before and after the meal, a very elaborate ceremony of saying grace was gone through, which occupied nearly five minutes, and consisted of an infinite number of how-

ings and crossings to every point of the compass. Indeed this invariable manifestation of gratitude, even for the most trifling gift, is a remarkable characteristic of the poorer classes.

About half-way between Syzran and Kvaliensk, we entered the government of Saratov, and here the hills had subsided to their old elevation, seldom rising above three hundred feet ; but they had again changed in character, and now receded some distance from the river. To judge also from the numerous herds of cattle grazing over them, they seemed to afford good pasture. The left bank was occasionally strewn for hundreds of yards with melons waiting to be conveyed away to those who should be imprudent enough to eat them.



Pilots.

CHAPTER VII.

SINGULAR MISAPPLICATION OF STEAM—TIMBER RAFTS—VOLSK—SHEEP
FROM THE CASPIAN—A MERCHANT PRINCE—SARATOV—EMANCIPA-
TION OF SERFS—VOLGA FEVER AND AGUE—GERMAN COLONIES—
THE ROBBER STINKOROSIN—LEAVE THE SAMSON—REFLECTIONS.

It is difficult to conceive that so magnificent a river as the Volga should be so desecrated, or so noble a power as steam so abused, as by the astonishing contrivance which passed us the day before we arrived at Saratov, and which could only have emanated from the brain of some semi-civilised Russian. So long as steam was unknown, or its application thought to be impracticable here, from the difficulty of navigation, the clumsy horse-machine might be tolerated as an original, and perhaps a somewhat ingenious method of effecting the desired end ; but after such notions had been exploded, and steamers were plying regularly from Astrakhan to Rhybinski, that any man should have been found so devoid of common sense as to construct an apparatus in which steam was to supply the place of horses in the way it did in the one before us, was certainly most amazing.

First of all, we observed approaching us a small

steamer, towing a boat, in which were a huge anchor and a quantity of men. At a distance of little more than half a mile appeared another funnel, planted in the midst of an unwieldy square-looking barge, on each side of which were very diminutive wheels, and on the deck sundry Chinese-looking habitations, some sticks with flags flying, and a mast. Behind this grotesque monster was a string of gay-coloured barges; and the whole turn-out would have been very picturesque, had not the aforesaid funnel vomited forth black jets of smoke. Presently we saw the anchor hove over the side of the boat, which then returned with the steamer, bringing with it the hawser; upon arriving at the machine, another anchor was lowered into the boat, and both started again on the same errand. Meantime the engine on the square barge was employed in warping itself and suite to the anchor first laid down; having accomplished which, it found the second prepared for it half a mile further on; and so it dragged its weary length along, making from twenty to thirty versts a-day.

The ingenious inventor had evidently found it impossible to disabuse his mind of the excellence of this warping system; and, by this wondrous misapplication of steam, he was just six times as long, used twice as many steamers, and about twenty times as much fuel, as if he had employed a common tug-boat to convey the same amount of cargo.

An immense raft of pines from Perm and the Ural

Mountains, on which were two or three cottages, was a more sensible-looking, as well as interesting object; and the wood in those regions is so cheap, that it pays to float timber from the head waters of the Kama down to the Caspian.

Before we approached our next wood station, Volsk, the downs had become more extensive. Hitherto the banks had been generally stratified, consisting of layers of yellowish sand, sometimes so soft as to be perforated by swallows, while in other parts it seemed to be undergoing a process of petrification. Now the cliffs were formed entirely of a cretaceous marl frequently composed of pure chalk, but often of a clayey colour. Here and there we passed a nobleman's house, situated near some miserable village, and in a very windy locality; but Volsk itself was charming. Snugly situated between two hills, one of which attains a height of nearly four hundred feet, its new green-domed churches and substantial-looking houses gave it a thriving appearance; while the valleys running inland were well cultivated and picturesque—the houses and fields, in some places, rising in terraces along the hill-side.

Since leaving Nijni, we had not seen anything half so pretty; and we doubted, indeed, whether we did not give the preference to the less elevated but more sheltered position of Volsk. From the hills above it we had some extensive views—the Volga always forming the most prominent and interesting feature. As we strolled along a shady dell, in which the dwarf

almond, linden, and stunted white poplar seemed to predominate, we heard a very unmelodious singing, and found it proceeded from a number of barefooted girls occupied in walking through wheat spread out on a barbecue, apparently for the purpose of turning it over. The song of each maiden was different, and pitched in a very high key. It was evidently considered a part of the performance; for our unwonted appearance even scarcely diverted them—it certainly could not make them forget their tunes.

Volsk contains about ten thousand inhabitants, and its principal trade is in tallow. We passed an immense herd of sheep, which seemed, from their conformation in certain quarters, to have been created expressly for the purpose of being melted into tallow, as their wool—of a very inferior description—was of little value. What added to the grotesqueness of



Sheep of the Steppes.

their appearance, was their perfect innocence of anything like tails. Nature seemed to have compromised this absence with a fleecy bustle, which sat

upon them in the most ridiculous and undignified manner. However, to these bustles does Volsk owe its prosperity ; large herds of sheep, graced by this peculiarity, being driven up annually from the steppes of the Caspian to the towns on the Volga.

The consignee of the flock we were then contemplating was said to be the richest merchant on the river—the countless millions of rubles which he was reputed to possess throwing Rothschild far into the shade. We were rather astonished when a heavy-looking man, clad in a shirt and loose drawers, who came reeling on board in a state of extreme intoxication, proved to be the millionaire in question ; and it was highly disgusting to find that he, and a friend in no better condition, were to occupy the cabin adjoining ours. Everybody paid great deference to this personage, chiefly, as it appeared, because he was a noble, though of the lowest grade, and could afford to get drunk on English bottled stout, at five shillings a bottle. Porter certainly seemed a very odd thing for a man at Saratov to select as a beverage for this purpose ; but the secret of the choice was, that it required an expenditure of about two pounds daily to enable him to effect the desired end—a circumstance that raised him immensely in the estimation of his fellows. How the pilots envied him ! A few miserable copeks spent with a similar design, subjected them to the harshest treatment. Not so, however, the more fortunate passengers in the barge. Profiting by the example of the wealthy

nobleman, rich with the spoils at Nijni, and responsible to no one, they one and all indulged most copiously ; and the scenes of drunkenness and immorality which went on at every station would not bear description, if, indeed, words could convey any adequate notion of them.

Whatever may be the morals of the peasantry in remote districts, those living in the towns and villages on the Volga are more degraded in their habits than any other people amongst whom I have travelled ; and they can hardly be said to disregard, since they have never been acquainted with, the ordinary decencies of life. What better result can indeed be expected from a system by which the upper classes are wealthy in proportion to the number of serfs possessed by each proprietor ? The rapid increase of the population is no less an object with the private serf-owner, than the extensive consumption of ardent spirits is desired by the government. Thus each vice is privileged with especial patronage. Marriages, in the Russian sense of the term, are consummated at an early age, and are arranged by the steward, without consulting the parties—the lord's approval alone being necessary. The price of a family ranges from £25 to £40. Our captain had taken his wife on a lease of five years, the rent for that term amounting to fifty rubles, with the privilege of renewal at the expiration of it.

Our new fellow-passengers had no other luggage

than some dozens of porter, upon which they regaled themselves during the night, until, overcome by their potations, they sunk on the floor of the cabin, and snored stertorously, till our arrival at Saratov roused them into the state of semi-consciousness which they had manifested on the previous day. We were indeed thankful to hear that Saratov was the destination of this merchant prince—a consideration which alone would have made our first view of the place delightful, had nature not asserted her own claims to our admiration. I thought the town, as we approached it, and saw its numerous domes and spires reflected in the glassy surface of the water, certainly entitled to the distinction of being called “Queen of the Volga.” The high range of hills which form its background—the rugged cliffs on the right—and the river, nearly three miles broad, which washes its walls, seem to have induced the inhabitants to adorn their city with more bright-coloured roofs and tapering steeples than is usual even in Russia, as if to do justice to the scenery amid which it is situated. We were unwise enough to land and disenchant ourselves, amid dust and desolation. Though some of the houses are handsome, the streets are deserted, the shops poor, and the *tout ensemble* most uninviting. Yet Saratov is said to contain forty thousand inhabitants, and is, after Samara, the most prosperous town on the river. The capital of a district containing nearly two millions of inhabitants, its revenue, in proportion

its size, exceeds that of any other city in the empire, and places it high in the scale of Russian towns.

The smaller towns of the government are not behind their capital, and present a marked contrast to those in the Simbirsk district. From the want of commercial or manufacturing enterprise, and other causes referred to in a former chapter, the revenues of all Russian towns are remarkably small ; and the only places which yield at all an adequate return, are those situated on the Volga, or the shores of the Black Sea, where the facility of transport at their doors, and the wonderfully prolific soil with which they are blessed, form an irresistible combination—compelling the inhabitants to take advantage of their favoured position, and to become rich in spite of themselves.

Thus it happens that the government of Saratov exports annually nearly as much grain as Orenburg ; while some idea of its extent may be formed from the fact, that, were it equally apportioned, each member of its population of two millions would possess a larger share of productive soil than could be awarded in any other district, except, perhaps, that of the Don Cossacks. It is difficult to account for the deficiency in the revenue of the towns of the neighbouring district of Simbirsk. The soil there is doubtless inferior, and the population considerably larger in proportion to its extent ; nor is there so much land under cultivation ; but that would hardly explain

the marked difference which exists between it and ~~the~~ provinces of Saratov, and particularly Orenburg. A more easy solution of the problem seems to be in the fact, that in Orenburg, which also contains a population of nearly two millions, not above thirteen in every hundred of the males are serfs. Those people having been originally the property of the crown, and made partially free, in accordance with the more enlightened system which the government is now pursuing, have turned their freedom to good account, and are enriching themselves and their country by an industry which, for the first time in their lives, they find to be profitable.

A more convincing proof could scarcely be obtained of the beneficial results of this liberation, than to find that the provinces in which it has taken place most largely, have already far outstripped any others in the empire. Well would it be for the country if the serfs of private individuals could be treated in like manner. The small serf-owners, in particular, prove the most invincible opponents to wholesale liberation, since those owning twenty serfs and under, by far outnumber the more extensive proprietors. Were the proportion of freemen to serfs the same in Saratov that it is in Orenburg, there can be no doubt that, with its superior advantages of position (being intersected by the Volga and its tributaries for a distance of three hundred and fifty miles), its prosperity would surpass that of the latter. Saratov exports large quantities of tobacco annually, the

quality of which is considered superior to that grown in other provinces.

Bell gives an amusing account of an interview, at which he was present here in 1722, between Peter the Great and Ayuka Khan, who, accompanied by his wife, "fifty years old, of a decent and cheerful deportment," dined with the Emperor. In the course of conversation, His Majesty intimated to the Khan that he meditated an expedition into Persia, and required a contribution of ten thousand men. The Khan replied that they were quite at the Czar's disposal; but as he thought five thousand would be sufficient, he would give orders that this number should join the imperial army; with which reply the Emperor parted from him perfectly contented.

Congratulating ourselves on being rid of our late passenger, we returned on board, and found the deck-cabin, in which we had been accustomed to spend the day, occupied by a party of Armenians, whose imperturbable countenances, and the firm position they had taken up on the floor, with their legs doubled under them, forbade any attempt at expulsion, if we had thought such a measure justified by circumstances. They were harmless individuals, picturesquely attired, with long beards and flowing robes, who occupied themselves in quarrelling with one another, sleeping, smoking chibouks, drinking tea, and eating melons. They were so excessively in the way that I was almost tempted to wish that this fruit might disagree with them, knowing, as I did,

from experience, the unpleasant results of such indulgence. Tempted at Samara by piles of magnificent melons exhibited for sale, we laid in a store wherewith to refresh ourselves during the sultry days, and had just finished our first dessert when the captain informed us that no stranger ever eats Volga melons without getting Volga fever. I hardly believed that anything half so disagreeable could be the attribute either of so noble a river, or of such delicious fruit, but that night our united pulses amounted to two hundred and thirty-eight, which, with an ague accompaniment, sufficiently proved the correctness of the captain's assertion. Fortunately, we had neither doctors nor medicine on board, still we suffered rather severely, as, after leaving Saratov, the heat gradually increased. The thermometer in the cabin seldom stood below seventy-two degrees. A week before there had been a sharp frost. To add to the effect of this sudden change of temperature, a scorching south wind set in, accompanied with clouds of dust, which made the deck a less agreeable lounge than we had hitherto found it. The banks, too, were parched and barren, and a hundred miles below Saratov, they might have been those of some burning African river.

Under such circumstances, we no longer hailed the wood station as a pleasant change, even had we been in a condition to profit by our stay. But what was most to be regretted was the impossibility of seeing anything of the German colonies, which commence

upon the right bank a little below Saratov, and extend southward as far as Sarepta.

The inhabitants are, for the most part, of the Lutheran or Moravian persuasions. The villages amount in number to upwards of a hundred, each containing an average population of about a thousand souls. The first colonists settled here under the auspices of the Empress Catharine.

Kamichin is a large town on the right bank, where, as long ago as the beginning of the last century, an Englishman (Capt. Perry) began to cut a canal to the Ilovla, a tributary of the Don, the distance not exceeding twenty versts. The formation of the country, and the difference of level, presented difficulties which were then deemed almost insuperable. Had he succeeded, it is questionable whether a connection with so small a stream as the Ilovla would have been of much use.

One night we anchored under a precipitous cliff, on the edge of which, it is said, was once perched the castle of the famous robber, Stinkorosin. As I could obtain no further information respecting this celebrated personage, I have been particular in recording his euphonious name, with the hope that some future traveller may immortalise one who—if there be anything in a name—must be entitled to be so honoured. The winds had freshened into a gale, and the night was as black as the rocks that frowned above us. The waves, high enough to dash into our ports and drench our

always accompanies fever, so that our spirits appeared to be depressed, in sympathy with the smoke which hung over our track in a long low black streak, corresponding with the windings of the river. To add to our miseries, we stuck, most unexpectedly, on a sandbank, and when, having now been sixteen days upon the river, it was not unreasonable that we should be impatient to leave it.

It was satisfactory to hear that Astrakhan was not worth seeing, after we had decided not to go there ; as, whatever may have been my inclination, I was now at least delighted to find that the irregularity of the steamers from Astrakhan, and the amount of additional time it would occupy to make the proposed tour from that city, warranted our disembarking at Dubovka ; while the fever and ague with which we were both prostrated, rendered it advisable that we should quit the river without loss of time.

At Dubovka, then, on the morning of the 19th September, we bade adieu to the Samson and its hospitable captain, whose kindness and attention had done much to make our voyage agreeable ; and, however relieved I might have been once more to have a different mode of travelling in prospect, it was yet with a feeling of regret that I looked round our cabin for the last time, to see that nothing was left behind save sundry remains of stores, considered to be the perquisites of the old lady who had waited upon us. Had we been obliged to trust entirely to the said stores, we should have fared badly ; but the captain

took compassion on our inexperience, and, finding that our attempts at catering had proved unsuccessful, insisted upon our dining with him every evening during the voyage.

Until passenger-steamboats are established on the Volga, the length of time which the voyage occupies in a tug, and the difficulty of procuring provisions, prove serious obstacles to those who wish to see the river. The traveller would hardly complain of the delays to which he might be subject, in a boat with a light draught, and unhampered by barges. The wood stations afford pleasant walks, with the probability of a sketch; but, from being almost invariably situated on the left bank, it was often necessary to make interest with the captain to be sent to the opposite side. In a good boat, and under ordinary circumstances, the voyage from Nijni to Astrakhan ought not to occupy more than eight days, and the variety and novelty of the scenes through which he passes would suffice to keep the traveller amused for that period; while, at the same time, he would hardly consider that the beauties of the river compensated for a residence of three weeks on its bosom. Still, to those with plenty of time at their disposal, the life on board may be made to pass agreeably; and the personal comfort of the voyager will depend entirely upon the arrangements he makes before starting—and in securing a good cook and servants of his own.

Few towns in Russia are better worth a visit than Kazan, while the Jigoulce offers the finest scenery I

had as yet seen in the country. Saratov vies with Nijni in beauty—the latter owing, perhaps, all to its lofty position—the former to its gay and handsome churches and buildings ; but the cities on its banks, or those banks themselves—rocky or wooded—fail to inspire feelings equal to those suggested by this monarch of European rivers itself.

A sense of its grandeur and magnificence seemed to grow upon one daily ; and now, though our experience had extended over more than a thousand miles of its winding course, I gazed with unabated wonder and admiration on its broad, rapid current, which swept away from us the Samson and its barges, and a feeling of desolation was induced, which reminded us that, our recent home having departed from us, it was time to seek another.



Hero-Machine and Barges.

CHAPTER VIII.

DUBOVKA—THE TRAM-ROAD—ADVANTAGES OF A CANAL—TRADE—
CALMUCK TARTARS—AN EXODUS.

DUBOVKA, formerly the capital of the country of the Volga Cossacks, is prettily situated on the right bank, but is a place of little importance, consisting chiefly of wooden houses, among which are sprinkled a few built of red brick, and these give a more unfinished look to the streets than if they were composed entirely of wood. The population does not exceed six or eight thousand. Its chief ornament—and one, indeed, of which the inhabitants may be deservedly proud—is their beautiful church, near which, unfortunately, we lodged, and found the incessant tolling of the ponderous unmusical bells distracting. Of course there was no inn to be found, but we were very kindly lodged in one of the best houses of the town, belonging to Mr Vodalaken, the agent of the steam company; and had it not been for the hardness of the bed, the heat of the weather, the quantities of vermin, the barking of dogs, and my own indisposition, I might have found our quarters more than ordinarily comfortable. We had some difficulty in

finding a "tarantasse," or travelling-carriage, which it was necessary to buy here before entering on the long steppe journey before us to Taganrog ; and this task was not rendered more easy by our utter ignorance of the language. Fortunately, from the proximity of the German colonies, most of the respectable people hereabouts were either Germans or spoke German, and most kindly afforded us every aid in their power.

Our host united in his person the two offices of steam company's agent and manager of the tram-road across to the Don. Unluckily he was absent from home, and I had scarcely any opportunity of gaining information regarding the amount and nature of the traffic which passes through Dubovka on its way from the Volga to the Black Sea. By far the most important item is iron ; and Siberian produce generally, timber from the northern provinces, and all manufactured goods intended for consumption throughout the greater part of Southern Russia, are also transported by means of the Don to Rostof and Taganrog ; while some of the products from the shores of the Caspian are landed at Tzaritzin, a town fifty versts farther south, from whence they are conveyed to the same river. By the route of Dubovka is brought all the produce of Turkey and the south of Europe, necessary to supply the wants of the inhabitants on the Volga ; which, finding its way as far north as the fair at Nijni, circulates from thence throughout the empire.

It is inconceivable how the country can rest satisfied with the wretched tram-road which now connects two such important rivers as the Volga and the Don. So far from there being any natural impediment to the formation of a canal across the isthmus which separates them, it is a perfectly simple undertaking, the distance not exceeding sixty versts, and the difference of level being comparatively trifling. The advantages to be gained by the completion of such a work must be apparent. A mere glance at the map will show that a canal forty miles long at this point would connect the Black Sea with the Baltic and the Caspian, and thus perfect a most elaborate system of inland communication. Nature has certainly done all that could be expected of her in this respect, and it seems hard that a government should not enable the inhabitants to avail themselves of the natural advantages which their country so eminently possesses.

If water-carriage excels land-carriage in proportion to the bulk of the produce to be conveyed, surely where iron or timber form the articles of transport, there can be no doubt of the superior merits of the former, even were the additional expenses incurred by the present system out of the question, or supposing that a railway had superseded the tram-road. At this particular juncture, when more wheat is exported from the ports in the south of Russia in one year than formerly left them during ten years, a connection between these rivers becomes of the highest

importance ; and did the wheat of Saratov and Orenburg find free access to the rising ports in the Sea of Azov, the increased facilities of communication with the sea-board would exert an influence which would be sensibly felt over the whole of the south-east of Russia. At present it is no wonder that the tram-road is not duly appreciated, since it does not descend to the water's edge ; and in order to save the expense and trouble incurred by transferring the cargo into carts, conveying it in them to the tram-road, and there loading the cars, many of the merchants adhere to the old system of transporting both the goods and the barges, in which they have descended the Volga, across the isthmus in bullock-carts. These barges are flat-bottomed, and only draw two or three feet of water. They are taken to pieces at Dubovka, laid in the carts, and in eight or ten days reach Kakalinskaia on the Don, where they are put together again with bolts, and float down to Rostof. Upon arriving here they are broken up and converted into firewood.

We remained two days at Dubovka preparing for the coming journey, and trying to shake off Volga reminiscences under the motherly treatment of Madame Vodalaken. A very short walk sufficed to show us the place. The most striking peculiarity of the inhabitants appeared to be their excessive politeness : every respectable-looking man took off his hat to every other respectable-looking man. At first it seemed natural that people in so small a place should all

know one another ; but when we found that to cross the street involved, in our case, at least six acknowledgments of these salutations, it became necessary to do violence to our feelings of modesty, and attribute to our decency of deportment their frequent occurrence ; and so I concluded the origin of this custom to be a desire on everybody's part to congratulate each other on looking so respectable in such an out-of-the-way part of the world as Dubovka. Against this mark of polished manners and good breeding, might be set off the indiscriminate way in which persons of both sexes bathed in the river, betraying a woeful lack of refinement, since it was evidently deemed a piece of unmitigated prudery to wear any covering whatever. Rather an apt illustration this of the spirit which pervades Russian society generally, where so much attention is paid to the most hollow conventionalities, and so little to those principles of honour and morality essential to the wellbeing of a community.

After a great deal of bargaining, carried on through the medium of a delightful little apothecary, we ultimately succeeded in buying a tarantasse, on so enlightened a construction that I doubted whether the C springs were not too far in advance of the age to be safe ; while a pole, instead of the high yoke generally used, seemed not unlikely to puzzle the Don Cossack post-boys. However, we thought ourselves fortunate in obtaining anything half so civilised, and were rejoiced to

see it appear at the door with three very tolerable horses.

We managed to get away by mid-day, and soon had the satisfaction of seeing the broad, bare, undulating steppe stretching interminably before us. As we left the town, a few small conical huts afforded fresh evidence of the Calmuck Tartars, who, quitting the deserts of Astrakhan, or crossing over the vast tracts of pasture-land which extend from the eastern shore of the Volga into Asia, occasionally travel to the northward, and pitch their tents near the towns on the western bank, when a fair or market day attracts them. These "kybitkas" or tents consist simply of a framework of wood, over which felt is stretched, while a circular aperture at the top gives egress to the smoke.

I should have stopped and paid a visit to these wanderers in their own habitations, had I not already inspected a party of them in Dubovka, and nothing could be more interesting than their whole appearance. Of all the inhabitants of the Russian empire, the Calmucks are the most distinguished by peculiarity of features and manners ; and certainly their ragged flowing robes, bound round the waist with a coarse dirty scarf, and exposing to view a copper-coloured chest, together with their red boots and flat yellow caps trimmed with fur, completed a wild costume, unlike anything to be met with in less remote parts of the country. Their long black hair hung in thick braids on each side of their faces, which were

of true Mongolian type ; and it was difficult to look on the low wide noses, high cheek-bones, and long narrow eyes of these men, and yet believe that they were inhabitants of Europe. I felt transported again to the borders of Chinese Tartary, where I had already visited a race sprung from the same origin, adherents of the same faith, and probably, to some extent, speaking the same language.

It is singular how little we know of those nomadic hordes inhabiting the vast steppes of Tartary and Thibet, whose only real allegiance consists in a religious veneration for the sovereign pontiff at Hlassa. Wandering over the deserts which form the boundary of Russia and China, they are a sort of connecting link between the two greatest empires in the world, as they become at pleasure the subjects of one or the other.

Once already from these regions have barbarian hosts poured forth, who, sweeping across the steppes which extend from the base of the Ural Mountains to the shores of the Caspian, spread themselves far and wide over the world of that day. We had crossed the very track of these invaders ; and as we looked upon their successors, encamping in miserable tents, roving over arid plains, a scattered and degraded race, it was difficult to conceive that they could be the precursors of more barbarians, destined again to overrun the enlightened part of the world ; and yet it is not long since the first Calmuck invasion took place. In the latter part of the seventeenth century, the Torgot

and Derbet divisions of this tribe descended to the banks of the Volga, extending their wanderings over the country of the Don Cossacks to the shores of the Sea of Azov. About this time Ayuka Khan, of whom mention has already been made, ruled over the whole nation.

Shortly after his death, and while weakened by internal dissensions, the Calmucks fell an easy prey to the designs of the Russian government, and remained subject to the imperial sceptre, until, in the winter of 1770–71, offended by the despotic measures of the Empress Catharine II., half a million of the tribe wandered rather farther than usual, and ended by pitching their tents in the dominions of his Celestial Majesty—a warning this to despotic governments not to trouble their nomadic subjects with the arrangements of the Home Department.

It was, indeed, as remarkable an emigration as the revenge that prompted it was signal; and we are irresistibly reminded by it of the only parallel instance which history records, of those wanderings in the desert of Sinai, undertaken under somewhat similar circumstances; and if the sojourning in the wilderness was of much longer duration in the one case, the distance travelled in the other was immeasurably greater. Unfortunately a large portion of the Calmucks were left behind, having been prevented by an unusually late winter from crossing the Volga. Those who reached China, after a journey of eight months, were most cordially welcomed by the

Emperor, who allotted for their occupation the Ily country in the province of Soongary, and granted them many privileges, in consideration of their voluntary submission to his rule.

To judge from the condition of the Calmucks I saw, their brethren in China have probably made an exchange for the better; and doubtless those who remained, suffered for the independent conduct of this portion of the tribe. They are in a great measure confined to the province of Astrakhan, and those who are immediately subject to the crown pay a tax amounting to seventy-five rubles a family. There is a committee for the administration of Calmuck affairs at Astrakhan, the president and some of the members of which are Russians.

Besides those who are under the dominion of the crown, there are several divisions of the tribe, each governed by separate princes. One of the most celebrated of these has built a palace on the shores of the Volga, not far from Astrakhan. This appears to be the nearest approach to a settled habitation that any of these restless beings have attained to; and so great is their dread of a more composed life and industrious habits, that when they are angry with a person, they wish "he may live in one place and work like a Russian." They live chiefly upon horse-flesh and koumiss, or churned mare's milk, from which a kind of spirit is distilled. I did not observe any camels as we passed their tents; but these animals are the indispensable attendants of their wanderings.

They pay the greatest respect and veneration to their Llamas, who, like their Russian neighbours, take every advantage of the supposed character for sanctity with which they are invested, to impose upon a barbarous and superstitious people; and there are now engrafted on their original Bhuddhistic faith a number of mystic rites and ceremonies, which are by no means orthodox additions.

The Calmucks and Nogays are the only nomade tribes which inhabit the country to the west of the Volga. They share, to some extent, the steppes to the eastward of that river with the Kirghees, some of whom I saw at the fair of Nijni, and who profess Mahomedanism. Though a smaller tribe, they occupy the territory allotted to them upon more independent conditions than do the Calmucks.

We did not make very rapid progress, though our horses were good and our carriage light. The yamshik or driver was deaf to threats affecting his vodka (drink-money); and the road was occasionally execrable. Following the bank of the Volga, it was continually intersected by rugged and precipitous ravines, not unlike those in the Campagna at Rome, except that they were steeper and narrower. It was left to the taste of the driver to take any one he chose of the numerous tracks that led to the bottom; and, indeed, it seemed of little consequence, as they were all equally bad, and full of fearful ruts.

We frequently found the remains of an imposing wooden bridge, which bore testimony to the fierce

winter character of the present rivulet ; and the government had apparently long since given up all idea of establishing permanent means of transit. Occasionally we passed long strings of bullock-wagons returning from market, where their owners had probably been vending water-melons — the staple article of consumption among the country people. I certainly never saw so many water-melons in my life, as in one day on these steppes. For hundreds of yards were they piled in heaps, and the entire population live upon them. A whole one is quite sufficient to constitute a sumptuous breakfast ; while a peasant's dinner seldom consists of anything else.

It is fifty versts (thirty-four miles) from Dubovka to Tzaritzin ; and the sun was just setting as we entered the town, descending the steep pitch down to the river at a break-neck pace. From these heights we had a lovely view of the Volga, as the last rays of a most brilliant sunset shed a warm glow over the vast basin, beautifully tinting the wooded islands in the distance.

Tzaritzin presents a very similar appearance to Dubovka. It contains about an equal population ; and although it cannot boast of so handsome a church, it perhaps exceeds the latter in the number of substantially-built houses. The inhabitants carry on a considerable trade with the Calmucks and Kirghees, who resort hither in great numbers on festive occasions ; and the country in the immediate vicinity is extremely fertile. It was so late when we arrived,

that I had only time to take a cursory glance at the town ; and I did that in no very amiable mood, our delay being compulsory, as no horses were to be procured at the post-station.

The fortress is situated on a cliff about a hundred feet above the river, but is, I believe, no longer garrisoned. Long ago, this town suffered much from frequent attacks of the lawless Cossack bands which infested the neighbourhood ; and it was with a view of protecting the frontier that the lines of Tzaritzin were thrown up, consisting merely of a wall of earth defended by palisades, which extended across to the Don. Had we been wise, we should have disembarked here instead of at Dubovka, and thus have saved ourselves a rough drive along the bank of the Volga ; for there is no post-road, as we imagined there was, directly across from Dubovka to the Don.

A dashing courier, with despatches for the Caucasus, started from the post-house just after we arrived, thus depriving us of the only available horses. He was dressed in true Circassian costume, and armed to the teeth. Screwing up his long twisted mustache, he scowled at us for daring to express a wish to proceed, and looked altogether so formidable, that it was a relief to see him rattle out of the courtyard, as he laughed contemptuously at our despair. I half envied him the journey on which he was bound. In thirty-six hours he would arrive at Astrakhan, and, crossing the steppes of the Caspian—if not murdered on the way—would, in a few days more, reach

the seat of war. Fortunately the post-house was a clean-looking place, and we had a good room given us, with rather a comfortable floor, on which I spread a highly-scented sheepskin, and passed the night very tolerably. While vainly attempting to induce the post-master to give us horses, by dint of a vehement repetition of the word "vodka," a man in the costume of a mujik or peasant came up, and addressed me in German. He was the first genuine colonist of this class that I had seen; and there was something very singular in hearing good German from the lips of one with an exterior so uncultivated. He proved useful as an interpreter, and offered to drive us to Sarepta, the settlement to which he belonged, and which is situated about twenty miles to the south. Unluckily our route lay in an opposite direction, and I regretted that I could not accept his invitation.

As described to me by those who had visited it, Sarepta must be a perfect curiosity. Surrounded by tribes of barbarous Calmucks, and visited only by scarcely less barbarous Russians, its inhabitants maintain the genuine old Saxon character—adhere to their native tongue, and to the simple manners of their Fatherland. Uncontaminated by the indolent and vicious habits of those amongst whom they are situated, they are a prosperous community, reaping the rich harvest of that industry and frugality which are the characteristic of their race.

The colony was established in 1769, during the

reign of the Empress Catharine, and consisted of but thirty individuals of both sexes. This little band belonged to the Moravian persuasion, and was under the guidance of some worthy missionaries, whose chief object in choosing so remote a locality was the conversion of the Calmucks.

No sooner had some symptoms of success, however, attended the efforts of these noble-minded men, than the Greek clergy interposed, and insisted that the converts should be admitted into their Church. Thinking, perhaps, that the Calmuck was as enlightened an individual while a Bhuddhist, as he would be after he joined the Greek Church, the Moravian missionaries did not persist in their efforts at evangelisation. The government, as in duty bound, supported the priests in their opposition, and may thus be congratulated on having aided and abetted a Christian Church in its successful attempt to deprive a whole nation of the blessings of the Gospel.

No effort is made to atone for this wanton bigotry, by the establishment of missions by the Greek Church among these wandering tribes. Denying to them the means of acquiring a knowledge of those important truths which the Moravians so earnestly desired to impart, it yet supplies no substitute for them,—an omission which is tantamount to positively prohibiting the Calmucks from attempting to reach heaven at all.

Let the Moravian missionary but extend his efforts to those territories which own the spiritual jurisdic-

tion of the Dalai Llama, and seek to convert the Calmucks there; he would certainly find more toleration in the headquarters of Bhuddhism than he has met with hitherto amongst the followers of the Greek Patriarch. Meanwhile, this little colony prospers under the wholesome influences of its faith, and by reason of the industry and integrity of its inhabitants. Unable more directly to benefit the surrounding savages, these honest Germans are living examples of the practical power of their religious principles, and form a striking contrast to the Russians of the neighbouring towns.

The population has now increased to eight hundred souls, who are chiefly employed in the cultivation of mustard, and the manufacture of the oil extracted from it. I could not ascertain the exact value of the exports in this article alone, but it is a product in such universal use all over Russia, that it must be very considerable.

The cotton and silk fabrics of Sarepta are extensively circulated throughout the empire; while calico and the coarser stuffs, of the nature of Manchester goods, find great favour with the surrounding tribes, who look to Sarepta for the fashions of the season. In this enlightened community, it is not to be supposed that the more refined trades are neglected. Here excellent watchmakers, opticians, bookbinders, and goldsmiths, follow their avocations, and are much resorted to by the inhabitants of the large Volga towns. Agriculture, too, obtains its due share of

attention from the colonists, and the soil is made to yield of its abundance, under a more improved system of cultivation than that pursued by the Russians generally ; while at the neighbouring little German village of Schönbrun, the rearing of cattle and sheep is successfully carried on. Such prosperity would be incompatible with the existence of the colony under the Russian government, did it not enjoy privileges and immunities which secure for it an exemption from the hardships which elsewhere press so heavily upon native enterprise. Sarepta pays a merely nominal rent to the crown, and the inhabitants possess the right, without restriction, of carrying on commercial transactions, not only throughout the empire, but in other countries, as merchants of the first guild ; consequently, in all the large towns of Russia there are agencies, or shops devoted exclusively to the sale of their merchandise. They enjoy, moreover, a species of constitution, regulate their own affairs, and adjudicate in criminal as well as civil matters. The ministers and the judges are identical—to wit, the mayor, and two members elected by the community.

Sarepta maintains intimate relations with the German colonies of the Saratov district, and in cases of a serious nature, an appeal is made to the general committee of these colonies. The town is neatly laid out, and beautifully supplied with clear water. The church, the school, and a few of the most important buildings, are of stone, the rest of wood.

Avenues of trees line the streets ; and here, under their grateful shade, we can imagine the patriarchs of the community seated during the afternoon, enjoying tobacco of their own growing, moistening it with beer of their own brewing, and regarding the members of the happy little society as children of their own rearing.

Had I known, before it was too late to alter our plans and secure another padaroshna, that such scenes as these were to be witnessed by making a detour of a few miles, I should not have hesitated to turn aside, and see the wonderful phenomenon of a community, prosperous, thriving, and happy, existing in a country, and under a government, which I had supposed incapable of affording the elements conducive to such a state of wellbeing.



Calmuck Tartars.

CHAPTER IX.

PARTING SENSATIONS—FIRST DISCOVERERS OF THE VOLGA—TRADE
IN THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY—PROHIBITIVE POLICY OF RUSSIA
—STEAMERS ON THE CASPIAN—ASTRAKHAN—THE SHORES OF
THE CASPIAN—ARID DESERT OF ASTRAKHAN.

SHORTLY after daybreak we were again *en route*, and I gazed somewhat wistfully at the post-house and wooden cottages which surrounded it, as we turned our backs upon the last signs of civilised life we should see for some time. No friendly German colonist would meet us at any future station. The people spoke an execrable *patois*,—an annoyance, by the way, which did not affect us, as the purest Russian would have been equally unintelligible to our unpractised ears. The Don Cossacks have rather an evil reputation amongst their neighbours; but I found that although but one opinion existed regarding their honesty, they were not accused of habitually resorting to acts of violence. Under these circumstances we were likely to be as well off among Don Cossacks as among any other of his Imperial Majesty's subjects; and so, determined to put any losses we might sustain in the list of incidental expenses, and to speak in the language of rubles and copeks, we set

we are about to part with an indescribable charm, when the imagination seems to have the power of causing the world to reflect our most intimate sensations. This, however, can only be the case when we know them as old friends ; hence it is, that though first impressions may be more faithful, they are always accompanied by the harsh business-like tone of mere ordinary sight-seeing. The mind is entirely occupied in examining the details, and appreciating the general effect, and wants that familiarity with, or, if I may so call it, affection for, those well-known features which springs from a longer and closer acquaintanceship.

Such, at least, I took to be the result of my experience, as I bade adieu to the Volga ; and these feelings suggested themselves the more forcibly at this moment, when I remembered the different aspects under which this noble river had been presented to me. At Nijni, I saw it crowded with shipping from the seas of Europe and Asia, bearing to distant lands the productions of the two continents, serving for a highway from one to the other, and traversing the whole length of the mightiest empire in the world ;—wonder and admiration then engrossed all my faculties. When, shortly afterwards, I was gliding down its rapid current, and living in the daily contemplation of its beauteous banks, the sensations were those of calm serenity and a placid appreciation of its various charms. And now, though the landscape at our feet was

all events, that the first portion of the river which was ever navigated was that which extends from this last bend to the shores of the Caspian.

Towards the end of the thirteenth century the Genoese established factories in the Crimea, and on the Sea of Azov ; and the position of Tana, at the mouth of the Tanais, or Don, goes far to show that communications were carried on by means of this river and the Volga. Monopolising the whole of the carrying trade between Europe and Asia, the traffic passed exclusively through the ports of these enterprising Italians, and continued to do so until the close of the fifteenth century, when they fell under the sway of the Ottoman Empire ; and thus it was, either by way of the Phasis and the Cur, or across this narrow isthmus, that, nearly six hundred years ago, all those Eastern productions which delighted and amazed our ancestors were conveyed. Then, richly-freighted caravans passed along the dreary track, laden with the merchandise which was to supply a continent ; while now, in the nineteenth century, and in this *civilised* empire, nothing is to be seen but an occasional creaking bullock-cart carrying timber or iron, the produce of the bleak north.

But there is an association, fraught with a still deeper significance, attached to this neck of land, which has served at the same time as a highway for the inroads of barbarian hordes, and as a barrier to that commercial enterprise in the East, upon the extension of which the civilisation of two continents

in a great measure formerly depended. Here, some centuries ago, in an attempt made by the Porte to improve its commercial relations with Central Asia—which had been much impaired by the diversion of Eastern trade from the overland route to that round the Cape—the Ottoman troops *first* encountered Muscovite barbarians, who then succeeded in obstructing the formation of a canal, designed by Selim the Second. That enlightened enterprise, undertaken under Mahomedan auspices, has never been carried out by a Christian power, while the blighting influence which was then exercised upon the cause of civilisation still characterises the Russian sway; and a defeat of the Ottoman arms, by the Muscovite aggressors of the present day, will be no less disastrous to that cause than was the savage onslaught first made upon the Turks by the untamed subjects of Ivan the Terrible.

About the middle of the last century, an English company was formed for the purpose of carrying on an Oriental commerce through Russia; but the ignorance and jealousy of the Muscovite government remained unchanged, though manifested in a more civilised form, and the enterprise proved a total failure.*

The Eastern traffic which in these days passes through Tzaritzin is scarcely worth consideration. The only solution of the problem which involves this anomalous state of things, ought to be in the fact of

* An interesting account of its proceedings was published by that remarkable man, Mr Jonas Hanway, its principal agent in Persia.

some much better way having been discovered by the government, for the transit of Eastern goods, than that adopted by the Genoese ; and considering that, for five hundred miles, the trans-Caucasian-Russian provinces are conterminous with Persia and Turkey, this would not seem an improbable conjecture to any one not acquainted with the commercial policy of the country. Not that it is very easy to say what that policy is ; but one effect of it, in this instance, is certain, that scarcely any use whatever is made of the route which does there exist. To explain this, it is necessary to discover the real principle upon which the government acts ; for it is absurd to suppose that it can be so infatuated as to believe that the protective system which it now pursues can ever advance the commercial interests of the country. Projecting into the heart of Asia, while it monopolises more than half the continent of Europe—possessing means of communication with the East by way of the Caspian, denied to any other European power—intersected by rivers expressly adapted to connect the ports upon the four seas between which she is situated—Russia might become the highway of nations. The wealth of Europe and Asia would thus pour into the coffers of the country through the various channels which it alone could so advantageously offer for the commerce of the world ; and the only reason why this result has not long since taken place, is the virtual prohibition by the government of the existence of such a

sary he should remember that its interests and those of the people are diametrically opposed to one another. He will then cease to wonder that men-of-war, instead of merchant steamers, regularly navigate the Caspian. The most wretched craft are freighted with the rich fabrics of Persia, while iron steamers are appropriated to the transport of precious soldiers. These steamers are also employed in blockading the eastern shores of Circassia ; and are ready, in case of a war with Persia, to convey troops to that kingdom. At present, they ply twice a-month between Astrakhan, Bakou, Lenkeran, Enzeli, and Astrabad. I was informed, moreover, that two iron steamers had been recently launched upon the Sea of Aral, with a view, it was said, of carrying out some commercial projects. These may some day prove to be of rather a questionable nature. There is a line of Cossacks extending across the Kirghees deserts to the Sea of Aral, established, no doubt, for the purpose of protecting these so-called mercantile arrangements.

I do not see, however, how it could compromise the selfish policy of the government to improve the navigation of the Volga ; for, although it is at present used almost entirely for purposes of trade, it might, in case of a war in these parts, be found a most useful auxiliary in the transport of troops. The experience of those who have been navigating this river for any length of time, goes far to show that the volume of water is rapidly diminishing ; and our captain referred to the increasing difficulties of navi-

Whether this view be correct or not—and, in accordance with more modern notions, we should at any rate throw back the date to a pre-Adamite era—there can be little doubt that, at some period, the Caspian extended over the basin of the Volga, upon which we were now looking. The whole configuration of the country supports such a hypothesis. Near this point the steppe follows the course of the Sarpa to the southward, rising precipitously from the deserts through which the Volga meanders. These deserts are impregnated with salt, and shells exactly resembling those found in the Caspian are plentifully scattered over the surface ; while the steppe, upon which we travelled to the Don, was composed of a fine rich black loam, devoid of any marine deposits. It seemed singular that, while crossing one of the most fertile districts in Russia, we should actually be looking down upon the most sterile ; but there can be no more satisfactory way of accounting for so sudden a change in the surface of the country, than by supposing that a great portion of it was formerly submerged. We congratulated ourselves that it was our lot to traverse the more elevated line of country ; and as we turned our backs upon the vast sandy deserts which extend to the Chinese frontier, and hurried away from the salt swamps of Astrakhan, the dull tame steppe looked quite pleasant, and a journey through the country of the Don Cossacks seemed invested with new and unexpected charms.

CHAPTER X.

DON COSSACK STEPPES—WILD TRAVELLING—POSTING EXPERIENCES
—AN UNPLEASANT DISCOVERY — SOMOVARS : THEIR MERITS—
COSTUME OF PEASANTS — A DON COSSACK HIGHWAY—THE DON-
ETZ—MEETING A TRAVELLER—NOVO TCHERKASK.

WE entered the country of the Don Cossacks at Jablonsky, our first stage from Tzaritzin. Nothing could be more dreary than the aspect of the country between the Volga and the Don, except, perhaps, that through which we travelled after crossing the latter river. The undulating prairie, covered with a short dry grass, interspersed with quantities of wild thyme and lilac crocuses, stretched away illimitably, and looked like an ocean regaining its tranquillity after a three days' storm.

For miles we did not meet a soul ; occasionally we saw a few bullock-carts carrying timber across to the Don, or a wild-looking Cossack galloped past on a wilder-looking horse. The road seemed carefully to avoid all villages, and the few we discovered at a distance consisted chiefly of round huts, so exactly like the haystacks amid which they were placed as to be scarcely distinguishable from them : but though I saw carts carrying straw, as well as these haystack

villages, I do not remember passing a rood of cultivation until we reached the Don.

The weather having been fine for some weeks past, the road was pretty good, though a mere track ; but the delays at the huts—dignified with the name of post-stations—were most annoying. However, after a ten hours' journey we reached the river, a placid and unpretending stream. Its banks had much the same character as those of the Volga—the high steppe on the west rising abruptly from the water's edge, intersected in every direction by ravines. We were ferried across, about sunset, to the pleasant little village of Piatibanskaia, where, for the third time since leaving Tzaritzin, we changed horses.

And now, for the following night and day, our journey presents one unwearied monotony ; one undulation is as like another as are the post-stations : generally, on arriving at one of these, not a soul is to be seen—a solitary chicken, perched on the wheel of a broken-down cart, is the only visible sign of life. At length, after sundry ineffectual attempts to open the door of the wooden cabin, a slovenly woman looks out, followed by three or four ragged brats. One of the children immediately disappears upon the steppe, returning in about half an hour with a bearded sullen-looking man, who, without deigning a remark, mounts one of the last team, and gallops away as if he never meant to come back : presently, however, half-a-dozen horses are seen rattling at full speed down a distant slope, followed by two men—our

sullen friend and his sullen friend, whom he seems to have picked up somewhere with the horses. By this time our yamschik, or driver, from the last place has succeeded in loosening the rope, which serves as a pole-strap, and which has hitherto been continually breaking on the side of every hill just when it was most wanted; upon the last occasion, however, he has apparently succeeded in getting it into a most permanent knot. Meantime three horses are selected from those which have just been driven into a sort of kraal—the work of harnessing begins, and occupies another half-hour. Notwithstanding all the experience which the driver brings to bear upon the subject of the pole-ropes, they prove a dreadful puzzle, and are evidently quite a modern and hitherto unseen invention.

At length everything is ready. The last driver is thrown into ecstasies at receiving a vodka of four-pence, after having driven us fifteen miles; the new driver is no less enchanted at the prospect of a similar magnificent remuneration; while the original sullen-looking man, who has been engaged inspecting and writing on our padaroshna, emerges with a grim smile on his countenance, and charges a ruble, by way of a good round sum, for the next fifteen miles, instead of the proper price, which is only eighty copeks (2s. 8d.) The yamschik then mounts the box in high spirits, and after having thus wasted an hour or two we are off again *ventre à terre*, down one pitch and up another, regardless of the ditch at the

bottom, over which the carriage and horses take a sort of flying leap, much to our discomfiture. Our delays, however, are too long and numerous to admit of any remonstrance affecting our speed, and the yamschik continues to earn his vodka by undergoing the most tremendous exertion. He shouts, and curses, and applauds, and whistles, and yells without ceasing, flourishing his whip over his head, by way of a hint that the lash may come down, which, however, it very seldom does ; for the horses, being without blinkers, invariably take the hint, and seem not to require much pressing. He is a picturesque figure altogether, this Don Cossack yamschik, with his huge red mustache, the ends of which are visible protruding on both sides of his head, as we sit behind him. He wears a grey fur cap, and a blue tunic reaching halfway to the knee, bound round the waist with a red sash. A huge pair of jack-boots, into which his loose trousers are thrust, complete a costume which, though not altogether unlike that of the ordinary Russian peasant, somehow invests the wearer with a greater degree of independence. In an hour and a half he has jolted us to the end of our stage, where the same delay occurs, and the same scene is re-enacted.

At night, however, the routine is varied : the horses are sometimes at home, but the delay is not much less ; we have to rattle at the door and wake the children, who cry and wake the woman, who wakes the husband, who, to be saved all further trouble,

immediately says there are no horses. We repeat incessantly *loshedye* (horses) and *vodka*; and when at last we show him twenty-five copeks, he produces three nags. We pat him on the back, and try to be friends, but our advances are very coldly received; and he fumbles and scribbles on our padaroshna, by the dim flickering light, for a most interminable time.

The yamschiks are more mystified in the dark than ever, and lose all the nuts in attempting to grease the wheels. At last, when we are off, it begins to rain, and we discover, for the first time, that our carriage leaks like a shower-bath. We are vainly endeavouring to avoid the deluge, when, after a violent jolt, we hear a rattle; upon investigating the cause of which, we find that the wheel will probably come off before our arrival at the next station, in which case we shall be obliged to pass the black stormy night in a wet carriage on a dreary steppe, miles from any habitation or means of obtaining assistance.

It may be imagined with what intense anxiety—as we slackened our speed into a cautious walk—we watched the loosening of all the spokes of one of our fore-wheels on such a night—the third we had spent on the road; and it was with feelings of no less satisfaction that we at last hailed our arrival at an unusually substantial cabin, where we determined to stay until morning should bring us fine weather, and some person to repair the wheel. It fortunately contained a wooden stretcher, on which a sheepskin that

I had bought was made to serve the purpose of a mattress, and, as such, proved very comfortable ; its demerits chiefly consisting in a most unpleasant and overpowering odour, and a great capacity for retaining fleas, so that by the time we arrived at Taganrog my importations from Don Cossack post-huts were considerable.

But if a Russian sheepskin may occasionally be regarded as a luxury, a Russian somovar is absolutely essential to one's existence. At its appearance all dreary reminiscences of shattered wheels and windy steppes vanish—the post-hut assumes a most cosy, comfortable aspect—the little animals hopping about one's legs are forgotten—you become utterly careless as to the existence of horses, overwhelm the sulky post-master with politeness, confound the Don Cossack maidens with signs and gestures expressive of extreme satisfaction, and, finally, turn in upon the said sheepskin under the influence of feelings which nothing else could have inspired. The most pleasant sight that meets the traveller's eye, as he journeys through these vast plains, is the bright, burnished copper somovar—the most cheerful sound that falls upon his ear is the grateful hissing and bubbling that issues from it. It is an object upon which the affections of the noble, no less than of the peasant, deservedly centre, and a source of the only sentiment, probably, which these two classes possess in common. The noble values his somovar as highly as he does his serf ; and the

serf values his somovar, no doubt, more highly than he does his lord. If an imperial ukase were to issue to-morrow, abolishing somovars, I verily believe it would terminate the existence of Russia as an empire.

No doubt it betokens a scarcity in the comforts of life that a tea-urn should be thus highly esteemed ; and the pleasures of existence must be few and far between, when tea-drinking is looked upon as the source of the highest enjoyment ; but as all human joys are dependent for their intensity on the circumstances by which they are controlled, so tea can never be so highly appreciated as during a journey on the steppes. We had bought some at Nijni, which had just arrived overland from China, and our provision for the steppes consisted entirely of flowery Pekoe, sugar, and rusks. As nothing but black bread was to be procured, we confined ourselves to this invalid fare at every meal, occasionally indulging in a few eggs when they were obtainable. Living upon such simple diet, and undergoing, at



SOMOVAR

the same time, great fatigue, tea acted as a most refreshing stimulant, while the peculiar construction of the somovar insured an excellent brew. Deriving its name from two Russian words, signifying "boil," "itself," the somovar is nothing more than a large brass urn, in the middle of which is a cylinder containing a quantity of live charcoal.

The top is shaped like a funnel, and open. This is the correct place for the pot—the fire at the bottom keeping the tea hot, and boiling the water at the same time. A slice of lemon is always used as a substitute for milk, and I soon thought it a much more agreeable addition.

The following morning, after getting our wheel clumsily patched up, we started under the bright auspices of a most glorious rising sun. The steppe was not so rough, and presented a more varied aspect. We passed through a few villages occasionally, consisting of small one-storeyed houses, surrounded by balconies, and more substantially built than those we had hitherto seen; while a wooden mill, situated on a sluggish-looking stream, fringed with willows, once enlivened the prospect; but, with the exception of these few willows, I saw not a single tree during the whole journey. We had numerous and extensive views over the winding Don, and the interminable steppe which stretched uninterruptedly to the Caspian, and appeared to be on a level of about two hundred feet lower than ourselves. Moreover, we observed numerous large herds of cattle, sheep, and horses, and passed more bullock-carts than usual, loaded with every conceivable species of gourd. They were accompanied by rough, surly men, and most unprepossessing females—though perhaps some allowance should be made for the ladies, regard being had to their unbecoming costume, which was entirely composed of a coarse

white nightgown and Wellington boots. The men were somewhat similarly attired, except that the nightgown was shortened into a tunic, and their loose trousers were tucked into their boots. The more respectable wore a sort of cavalry foraging-cap with a red band.

The country of the Don Cossacks is much more thickly peopled than the traveller who follows the line of white posts across the turf which mark the *post-road* has any reason to suppose; indeed, it seems an established principle that the post-hut should be in the most solitary position, where it is impossible to obtain the assistance requisite for the constant repairs which are rendered necessary by the rough nature of the country traversed. Upon obtaining our *padaroshna* at Dubovka, we were furnished with a list of the post-stations, which, however, was only forthcoming after a great deal of delay, as the postmaster seemed never to have heard of the route we proposed taking. He must ultimately have invented the names and distances, which were carefully marked on the list, for, with the exception of the first, not a single station named existed in reality; and had it not been that occasional glimpses of the Don satisfied us that we were following our intended course, no possible means existed of knowing whether we were journeying in the right direction or not.

The chief characteristic of the Don Cossack postmasters—and they probably are good specimens of the

race—is a sullen apathy and dogged imperturbability, excessively irritating to wayworn travellers, whose efforts to be understood were, in our case, absurdly futile,—threats, rubles, and supplications proved alike unavailing. We pointed to our feeble wheel, and to the setting sun ; the postmaster exhibited no surprise, no sympathy—nothing but a pot of grease as a remedy for a worn-out tire. Once only my earnest entreaties elicited an abrupt inquiry as to whether I was a Christian. I knew enough Russian to understand the question, and answer in the affirmative ; and was instantly desired to make the sign of the cross as a proof of the orthodoxy of my profession. As the cross is made in a peculiar manner, and varies in some of the sects of the Greek Church, I declined compromising myself by an unsuccessful attempt ; upon which the Cossack shrugged his shoulders with a sneer, and reserved his aid and his sympathies for Christian travellers.

We were ferried across the Donetz, a noble stream rivalling the Don in magnitude ; and from the heights above we had a good view of the confluence of the two rivers. The steppes to the westward of the Donetz are a vast carboniferous deposit ; and the most important mines are situated at Bakmout, in the government of Iekaterinoslav. At certain seasons a steamer is employed — of course by government—in towing barges loaded with anthracite from these mines. The word Donetz is supposed by Clarke and others to have been the ori-

gin of the name given by the Greeks to the Don ; and the transition from Donetz, or Danaetz, to Tanais does not seem a very violent one.

Numerous vineyards line the banks of the Don the whole way to Tcherkask, which produce a great quantity of sparkling wines, somewhat similar to those of the Crimea. According to the last official reports, the exportations from these vineyards alone amount to three hundred and seventy-five thousand rubles. As we approached the capital of the province, we were startled by the unexpected vision of a traveller, the first we had met for more than three hundred miles. With curiosity something akin to that which is experienced on inspecting an unknown sail at sea, I gazed through the cloud of dust at the dirty vehicle and its still dirtier occupant as they rattled past, and was enabled to form some idea of the appearance we must ourselves have presented, though in no respect enlightened as to the rank or station of the individual. Indeed, there is nothing to guide one in estimating the condition of a Russian on a journey ; horses, carriage, driver, traveller—all look equally ragged and unkempt, and are covered with one uniform coat of dust. The traveller and the carriage are neither of them washed until the end of the journey. This might therefore be a prince going to assume the government of a province, or the nineteenth clerk in a police-office, for any outward indications to the contrary.

The night was far advanced when we at last distin-

guished the picturesque outline of Novo Tcherkask by the clear light of a full moon. Crossing a small tributary of the Don, we toiled slowly up the base of the hill on which the town is situated, and passed under a grand triumphal arch erected in honour of Alexander, which looked all the more imposing and mysterious at that hour, from our being totally unprepared for any such architectural display. This being the first town we had seen since leaving the banks of the Volga, there was an excitement in the change from the dreary lifeless steppe ; and although the tramp of the sentinel was the only sound that rung through the now deserted streets, it was a pleasure to rattle over them, and feel we were at length in the capital of the country of the Don Cossacks.



Girl of Tcherkask

CHAPTER XI.

DON COSSACKS : THEIR ORIGIN — DON COSSACKS AS SOLDIERS, AS AGRICULTURISTS — EXTENT OF ARABLE LAND — DON COSSACK STATISTICS—A BAD ROAD—DELAYS—AN AIDE-DE-CAMP FROM THE CAUCASUS — THE POSTING SYSTEM, AND A RUSSIAN'S NOTIONS OF IT.

THE town of Novo Tcherkask was founded by the Hetman Platoff in 1806, the inundations to which the former capital was exposed having rendered it necessary to remove the seat of government to a more elevated position. In his anxiety to avoid the floods of the Don, the Hetman has fallen into the opposite extreme, and perched the new capital on a most unfavourable site. Eight miles distant from the river, it is unable to benefit by the increasing traffic which passes along its stream, and the approaches are steep and inaccessible in almost every direction. The only advantage which is afforded by its lofty situation is an extensive view to the southward, and in clear weather the snowy peaks of the Caucasus are said to be distinctly visible. The population amounts to about ten thousand. The streets are broad, but the houses mean ; and it is remarkable that the practice of raising

them, as it were, upon stilts, like corn-stacks in a farmer's haggard, which was no doubt necessary in the old inundated town, has been continued by the working classes in the new : altogether it is a straggling, ill-laid-out place, in no degree calculated to realise the expectation raised by its approach through an ostentatious archway.

The creation of the last few years, Novo Tcherkask is in a great measure devoid of that national character which rendered the old capital so interesting, and which is so graphically described by Clarke. Since the Don has ceased to be the boundary of Europe and Asia, the inhabitants of this district have become to some extent occidentalised, and I saw none of those striking costumes described by earlier travellers. With the manners and customs by which they were once distinguished, the Cossacks are losing all traces of their former independence, and, as they become gradually absorbed into the Russian empire, their identity as a race must soon cease.

Nothing can be more convenient for Russia than the position of this province, and the martial character of its inhabitants. Situated in the remote corner of an empire whose extensive frontiers are continually threatened by neighbouring tribes, the Cossacks are regarded as its natural protectors, and, as such, are posted in one continuous line from Siberia to the Black Sea. They also compose a great proportion of the army engaged in the Caucasus, and which is being constantly reinforced by levies from

throw no light on the matter themselves, and so the derivation of the race and of the name will probably remain for ever an interesting subject of investigation. One thing is certain, that, whether springing from the same stock or not, the Cossacks cherish a most unmitigated hatred toward the Russians. They have been insidiously deprived of almost every privilege which they once possessed, and from being a free republic, responsible to no one but their own Hetman or President, they have sunk into the same condition of slavery as the inhabitants of the neighbouring provinces. In former days the distinction of rank was unknown—now, there is a Don Cossack aristocracy ; then, there was a community in landed property—now, the whole district has been divided into estates, and serfdom established ; and those who, as crown peasants, would be comparatively free in other districts, are here subject at any moment to be pressed into the army. Indeed, it is a most unfortunate thing for these poor Don Cossacks that they have obtained that character for bravery which the Russians are at the greatest pains to attribute to them. In the course of my later travels I fell in with a Hungarian officer who had been present at many of the skirmishes in the Caucasus, and who assured me that the valour of the Don Cossacks was one of those popular delusions which the government is most anxious to encourage ; for it answers the double purpose of flattering the vanity of a discontented race, who are thereby rendered more easily

subservient to their designs, and of inspiring a wholesome dread into other nations, who have hitherto been accustomed to regard them with a mysterious awe, and to conjure up monsters of appalling ferocity, and of a terrific aspect, as representatives of the high-sounding title by which they are distinguished. The Circassians have, by dint of frequent contact, learnt to estimate these formidable warriors at their true value, and hold them in almost as great contempt as they do the ordinary Russian soldier. It must be remembered that, in those campaigns in which the Cossacks have distinguished themselves, it was only by contrast with other Russian troops ; and it is rather for their barbarity and cruelty in harassing a retreating army that they are celebrated, than for any satisfactory displays of real valour.

If, instead of draining the country of a vast proportion of its able-bodied population, the government were to encourage the inhabitants to pursue agricultural or mercantile occupations, there can be no doubt that the superior advantages which this district possesses, in respect both of its soil and its position, would offer additional incentives to their industry. The following statistics, as derived from the official reports, will, I think, not only prove that these advantages do exist, but that the Don Cossacks are highly endowed with that enterprising spirit in which Russians generally are so deplorably deficient, and which seems to be one of the few remaining indications of an independence long since extinguished.

We find that the population of the whole province amounts to seven hundred thousand, spread over an extent of three thousand square German miles, thus allowing an exceedingly low average of about two hundred and forty inhabitants to the square mile, and which gives forty acres of excellent pasture-land to each individual. When we divide the soil under cultivation by the population, it appears that each inhabitant cultivates about eight acres, or an extent of nearly two acres more than the inhabitants of any other province. Indeed, so low is the average of land under cultivation, in seventeen out of the fifty-one provinces of which the empire is composed, that the quantity of grain produced is insufficient for the support of the people. When we consider the interruptions to their labours, caused by their liability to serve as soldiers, and the decrease of the population by the absence of nearly a hundred thousand already so engaged, we are fairly entitled to conclude that the Don Cossacks are among the most energetic and enterprising of his Imperial Majesty's subjects.

It is only consistent with the general system of government that, as such, they should be employed chiefly as targets for Circassian riflemen, or exposed to the onslaughts of Kirghees robbers upon the Thibet frontier; and we may imagine a Don Cossack, keeping guard in these dreary deserts, congratulating himself upon being a native of the most highly-favoured province in Russia, and wondering how his wife and children are carrying on the culti-

vation of the eight acres of land he is never likely to see again. It is not to be supposed, however, that by these eight acres under cultivation is meant soil actually producing every year. The great extent of arable land renders it unnecessary to take any more than one crop out of the same ground every ten or fifteen years. It is said that the arable land is equal to about one-third of that in pasture ; this our former calculation has shown to be considerably above the mark, although there can be no doubt that, in point of fact, almost the whole district is susceptible in the highest degree of cultivation. It consists of a fine rich black loam, peculiar to the steppe, and known under the Russian name of "tchernozième." The base throughout the greater part of the Don Cossack country consists of chalk. Besides corn of every variety, linseed is extensively cultivated for the sake of its oil.

Upon the fine grazing land which this province affords, cattle thrive amazingly, and at scarcely any expense to their owners, who so little appreciate their value that they frequently kill them for the sake of the tallow. It has been sagely suggested that the meat, instead of being buried, should be exported, and that some use should be made of the milk. I tasted some excellent cheese, but could not discover that it was an article of commerce. Horses are abundant, and highly esteemed throughout the empire : they were originally imported by the Tartars, and are a small wiry race, varying in price from thirty to fifty shillings each. Obligated, when

young, to endure severe winters, they are capable afterwards of undergoing any hardship : should they escape the epidemics and droughts of their own country, they are probably destined to be exposed elsewhere to the fortunes of war, as they are drafted in large quantities into cavalry regiments.

As these details are extracted entirely from government reports, very little reliance can be placed upon them, containing, as they do, so many discrepancies and contradictions. Their general tendency is to err, by giving a too favourable view of matters ; but they serve, nevertheless, officially to prove that the country of the Don Cossacks is the most ill-used province in the empire, since it is prevented from deriving any benefit from the advantages which its fertile soil, its hardy peasantry, and its countless herds of cattle would insure.

Notwithstanding our being in the capital of a province celebrated for its horses, we found great difficulty in procuring any at the post-station, and were only consoled for the delay by looking upon it as an additional evidence of our approach to civilisation. At last we quitted the town at full gallop, dashing with frightful rapidity to the bottom of the ravine upon the edge of which it is situated, and whirling over the steppe along a road so execrably rough that I at once perceived we were on the principal post-road in the country.

There was an end of rolling over smooth grassy

turf, as we had hitherto done, guided only by the fancy of the yamschik, and a line of white posts. Now we were retained within proper limits by two ditches, and jolted in anguish over what had once been a marsh, and in which the deep tracks of winter traffic had been dried by the sun into hard ruts and furrows, and the caked unyielding clay threatened at once to break the springs of the carriage and to dislocate the joints of its occupants. We found it necessary to jam ourselves as firmly as possible into our seats, to prevent being struck against the sides; and as we hurried down the precipitous banks of the ravines by which the road was continually intersected, it required an additional exertion to prevent being jerked out altogether. It was a great relief at last to find that our light carriage had hopped rather than rolled over fifteen versts, and that we had arrived, though in a somewhat bruised condition, at the next station.

Here our road was crossed by one which connects St Petersburg and Moscow with Stavropol, the headquarters of the Russian army in the Caucasus. We were at this point about two days' and nights' journey distant from the seat of war; and consequently we half expected, in answer to our inquiries for horses, to be told that they were all engaged by officers carrying despatches. It was useless, on hearing this, to point to a stableful doing nothing;—our padaroshna only bore one royal stamp instead of two, which indicate express government service, and

as strangers and civilians we were considered by no means entitled to be forwarded on our journey ; so we took up our abode, with philosophical resignation, in a room devoid of all furniture and swarming with vermin, and watched successive arrivals and departures ;—officers hurrying in one direction, and ladies, with large families, journeying placidly in another, all producing the same padaroshna which intimated to the obedient station-master that the interests of the government were vitally concerned in the promptitude with which he supplied horses.

It was useless to expect any favourable result from a bribe. The station-master, who seemed to be a person of considerable importance, with a gold band round his cap, and attired in the costume of a government official, pocketed our rubles with great relish, but was immovable in his conscientious retention of the horses for the service of his imperial master, and would not trust our honesty so far as to harness them first and wait for the bribe until we were prepared to start. At length I accosted, in French, a dashing young aide-de-camp, whose appearance at the station operated like magic on this official yamschik, and who, on finding that we were English, ordered horses to be put at once into our carriage. His excessive politeness, evincing an evident readiness to die upon the spot if such a sacrifice would advance us one stage upon our journey, contrasted singularly with the incivility of the station-master—they were both perfect specimens of Russian honesty ! I must

say, however, that they were devoted servants of the crown, and I can conceive no severer test of the loyalty and obedience of a soldier than to order him off at an hour's notice on a ten days' journey in a Russian post *telega*. It was with mingled feelings of wonder and respect that I saw the polite young officer seat himself upon a bundle of straw in an open springless cart, such as is commonly used by the peasants of the country, and, in defiance of wind and weather, proceed upon a dreary journey of eight consecutive days and nights to Moscow. Every two hours he would be aroused from slumbers, denied to any but a Russian under such circumstances, in order to change his vehicle—for the cart, like the horses, is the peculiar property of the last station. As he gracefully bid us adieu, and wrapt his white military cloak about him, I thought that the blood of his Scythian ancestors most surely still flowed in the veins beneath that polished exterior.

Our experiences at this station may serve to illustrate what we were doomed to undergo at every post-house between it and Taganrog. Sometimes we succeeded in bribing the *yamschiks* into exertion in our behalf; once we hired a private team, and paid for government horses into the bargain; once we were indebted to the kind offices of the little German wife of a surgeon of a Cossack regiment, who stood security for the due payment of a bribe upon our being ready to start; and once, upon the steppe, a sulky *yamschik* refused to accelerate his pace, and

would have deserted us upon that dreary track, had I not presented a six-barrelled revolver at his head, and threatened him with immediate destruction if he quitted the box. Such, in the case of strangers, is the practical working of the much-vaunted system of Russian posting ; and indeed no other result can be expected, when we consider the purely military purposes for which it has ever been organised.

Those crown peasants who belong to the postal administration are bound to furnish a certain number of carts, horses, and yamschiks, in consideration of which they are released from all pecuniary obligations for the land which they occupy, and are, moreover, entitled to a certain fixed charge per post. This is in some provinces an absurdly small sum : in none, probably, is it lower than in the country of the Don Cossacks. The average of our whole expenses, of posting with three horses, since leaving Dubovka, *including our living*, repairing the carriage, greasing the wheels, and all the bribes and vodkas we had found it necessary to lavish, only amounted to fourpence-halfpenny a mile. It is but fair to the sullen unsophisticated station-keepers on the other side of Tcherkask to say, that they rarely expected a bribe at all, or, if they did, were easily moved by a gentle *douceur*. These men are appointed by government, and are bound to have horses always in readiness for couriers with despatches. There is a book kept at each station, in which the number of horses that belong to it is

marked ; and if the keeper cannot satisfactorily account for an empty stable, the complaint of the traveller is entered in the book. This is of course not attended to unless the person making it is in government employ. The impropriety of this arrangement throughout, lies in the fact of its being entirely a crown speculation ; the whole object is to convey despatches to distant parts of the enormous empire in the most speedy and economical method possible. To effect this, the convenience of the rest of the community is completely sacrificed, when, at a very slight additional expense, the two things might be rendered quite compatible with one another. A few more horses should be furnished to each station, and the postmaster obliged to supply every traveller who could pay, without the necessity of his producing a padaroshna ; and if, instead of charging the ridiculously low prices which are at present imposed, a higher rate were introduced, in order to cover the expenses incurred by a superabundance of idle horses, there can be no doubt that travellers would willingly pay for it, for the comfort of being able at once to proceed on their journey.

It is singular that, notwithstanding the detestable way in which the posting arrangements of the country are managed, there is no point upon which Russians pride themselves more highly than upon the facilities which they allege to exist for travelling. I have seldom been in the company of a Russian more than a few minutes without his

asking me whether I did not consider that posting in Russia was unequalled in the world, since it combined at the same time comfort with economy, and safety with rapidity. Upon which I reply, that "I can discover no comfort in a room in a post-hut, with a mud floor, no window, and no furniture." "What!" says he, amazed, "you surely don't get out at the post-houses!"

Well, I admit the economy of the system, but demur to the idea of its being safe travelling, as sundry visions of broken-down wheels and steep ravines rise before me. My Russian friend triumphantly informs me that "he has just accomplished twelve thousand versts in three months without an accident."

"Or getting out at a post-house?"

"Of course not; why should I get out at a post-station when I have got a comfortable carriage to sleep in?"

"Well, at any rate you will allow that the delays for horses are most annoying, and the station-masters very insolent—the travelling is only rapid when absolutely *en route*."

"Ah! for you strangers it is impossible to get horses—if you don't speak the language, you will be both cheated and insulted; but it is very different with us, who know that, to manage such *canaille*, blows, and not rubles, ought to be abundantly bestowed."

And so my opponent walks proudly off, satisfied that, because he has journeyed twelve thousand versts

in three months—during which time he has thrashed on an average twelve station-keepers a-day, lived entirely on black bread, slept every night in his carriage, and never changed his clothes—the comforts of travelling in his country are unequalled in the world.



Taraxitane.

CHAPTER XII.

COLONIES — NACKCHIVAN—ROSTOF : ITS COMMERCE—OBSTACLES TO
ITS PROSPERITY — QUIT THE COUNTRY OF THE DON COSSACKS—
TAGANROG : ITS HISTORICAL ASSOCIATIONS—THE WOOL TRADE—
MERINOS—A DILEMMA.

THE most striking evidence of the indolence and incapacity of Russians generally, in mercantile affairs, is to be found in the prosperity of those colonies which have been established for the most part by the Empress Catharine the Second, at whose invitation bands of foreigners have immigrated from distant lands to reap the rich reward of their industry and enterprise, in a country where the inhabitants themselves have proved incompetent to take advantage of those sources of wealth which it affords. These colonists consist chiefly of Germans and Armenians ; and the traveller who journeys from Sarepta for some hundreds of miles in a westerly direction, and arrives at last in the Armenian settlement of Nackchivan, might almost feel persuaded that his route had lain in a diametrically opposite direction, and that he had travelled from Germany into Turkey, rather than that he had passed only from one Russian province into another. Clarke, who descended the Don some

quitted Russia, without the preliminary annoyances of innumerable police-offices, and advertisements of your intended departure in the newspapers.

Nackchivan is a name borrowed from that of the ancient town near the foot of Mount Ararat, which the Armenians believe to have been founded by Noah, after the Flood, and to contain his grave. The town contains about six thousand inhabitants ; a most thriving, wealthy population, who carry on a brisk trade with the Caucasus, and are not averse to a sly stroke of business with Circassia. They enjoy an exemption from the poll-tax, and possess other privileges, and settled in the dreary steppe about the year 1780, having, according to Pallas, immigrated hither from Karassu Bazaar, in the Crimea. Its position, near the mouth of the Don, is eminently adapted for commercial purposes, and an important fair is held here annually. The Armenian merchants are noted for their enterprise, and the courage with which they undertake journeys into Tartary and Thibet, returning hither with the spoils of those distant lands.

After leaving Nackchivan, the road followed the ridge of the steppe overhanging the Don, and we obtained some extensive views towards the Caucasus. Soon the gay churches of the new and important town of Rostof glittered in the distance, and we rattled up to the post-house amid clouds of dust and hosts of other travellers.

Rostof proved the pleasantest interruption to our

journey we had experienced since leaving the Volga. It would be an interesting town to visit in any country ; it is doubly so to the traveller who has been accustomed for days to simple earth and sky. Whether he be romantic or utilitarian in his tastes, he will be delighted with Rostof. The steppe, which is here intersected by a precipitous ravine, projects boldly into the Don, forming an elevated promontory upon which the town is perched ; the steep streets, often divided from one another by dangerous gullies, but united in the one common object of converging to the noble river which winds below the town, and which here suddenly becomes broad and deep enough to admit of a fleet of small craft anchoring in its stream ; the picturesque houses, irregularly built, with their many-coloured roofs and varied styles of architecture ; the mixed population, whose costumes differ no less than their pursuits ; the gaudy churches crowning the heights, and the view from those heights themselves—all combine to form attractions which commend themselves to the attention of the traveller in search of the picturesque : while, on the other hand, the smoke from the little steamer puffing up the stream, the clang of iron as it is thrown into the holds of the vessels, the creaking of cranes as the work of loading and unloading goes busily forward, are sights and sounds no less congenial to him who is interested in the commercial prospects of the country through which he is travelling.

It does not require a very keen observer in such

matters to discover in Rostof a town endowed with such great natural advantages that it has been compelled to assume a position of commercial importance in spite of those obstructions which are incidental to its existence under a Russian government. When the Greeks, sailing across the Palus Meotis, founded Tanais, at the mouth of the Don, they as highly appreciated the importance of the position as did the Venetians and Genoese, by whom they were succeeded, and who established factories at Tana, nearly opposite Rostof.

In modern times, Peter the Great was the first to discover that the resources of the country demanded an outlet, and so he built Taganrog in its present unfavourable position. Not long after the Turks evacuated the left bank of the river, Rostof sprung up—a testimony to the accurate judgment of those maritime nations who had placed their factories upon the river rather than on the sea-coast.

The importance of Rostof was in no degree diminished by its proximity to Taganrog; on the contrary, it has now become almost essential to the existence of that very port, which is the chief barrier to its prosperity. This is an apparent paradox, not very difficult to explain. All the commerce of the interior of the empire with the ports on the Black Sea, which comes by the way of the Volga and Dubovka, necessarily passes through Rostof; upon arriving here, the produce is transhipped from the shallow boats in which it has descended the Don, into lighters, and is

conveyed to Taganrog. If the mouth of the river, which is now too shallow to admit anything larger than mere coasting craft, were deepened, there would be no necessity for this expensive proceeding. The merchants of Taganrog, instead of having branch establishments at Rostof, would remove thither ; and Taganrog, which now prospers only because Rostof is unapproachable, would cease to retain its commercial importance.

Under the present system, the public pay heavily to support two ports instead of one. I was informed that there would be no great difficulty in removing the bar at the mouth of the Don ; but this is not the only obstacle to the progress of Rostof. At present there are only certain seasons of the year when the river is navigable, even for flat boats, above Tcherkask ; and although there is more traffic on the Don than on any other river in the south of Russia, no effort is made to remedy this evil by a judicious application of engineering skill, which would render the river available throughout the year. As I wandered along the quays, I observed great quantities of pig and wrought iron, timber, birch-bark, and firewood ; and when I considered that these bulky articles had been brought down a distance of two thousand miles by means of two rivers alone, and that the expense of crossing the isthmus, forty miles broad, which separated them, probably exceeded the cost of the freight for the rest of the way, I did not so much wonder that the river remained shallow, as that

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Rostof should prosper in spite of every hindrance that the indifference of the government neglects to obviate or remove.

The present population of the town amounts to about twelve thousand. The river is crossed by a curiously constructed bridge, which has somewhat the appearance of a permanent raft. The opposite bank is low, marshy, and frequently flooded to a great distance. It is a vast plain, rising imperceptibly to the sources of the sluggish Manitch, whence it sinks gradually to the shores of the Caspian.

Shortly after leaving Rostof, we passed numbers of carts loaded with anthracite from the mines of Bakmout. It was said that when these mines were first opened by private enterprise, so large a sum was charged by government for a license to work them, that the ardour of the speculators was completely damped. However, it soon became evident that government was no less a sufferer than the public; and greater facilities are now afforded to the development of these mineral treasures.

We had crossed the boundary which separates the wild country of the Don Cossacks from the small district of Taganrog; and the road, becoming gradually worse as we approached civilisation, was almost unbearable, now that it connected two of the most important towns in this part of Russia. Precipitous ravines and interminable steppes were the only objects of contemplation; and I felt disposed entirely to agree with a witty Frenchman,

tinni Dvor, built in the form of a square. Under these colonnades sea-faring men from every country on the Mediterranean mingle with Armenians, Tartars, and Cossacks ; while the most extraordinary variety of goods are exposed for sale in the crowded shops. Every other part of the town is of course lifeless and dull ; and the tall white houses, baked by the broiling sun, render the streets so intolerably hot during the day, that nobody walks in them who can help it. There are shady gardens, however, where the band plays in the afternoons, and pleasant grass-grown ramparts overhanging the sea and smaller shipping, which afford an agreeable lounge ; and from hence, in clear weather, the old Turkish fortress of Azov is distinctly visible. In former days these were the outposts of Russia and Turkey ; hence the extensive fortifications of Taganrog, which now, no longer necessary, are fast falling into decay.

There are few historical associations of any interest connected with Taganrog. Founded by Peter the Great in 1706, apparently for military purposes, he evidently foresaw that it would rise to a position of some mercantile importance, and bestowed more than ordinary care and attention on that account on a town of his own creation, and where his sojourn is commemorated by an oak wood of his own planting. It was here that the Emperor Alexander died. There is nothing whatever to interest, apart from this consideration, in the house where that event occurred, but which, nevertheless, all travellers are expected to visit.

is causing some uneasiness to Russia. Indeed, it seems impossible that any other result can be anticipated, from the late experiences of sheep-farming in these provinces, than the decline of the wool trade.

Some years ago large quantities of merinos were introduced upon the steppes, and at first it was hoped that they would thrive, despite the inclemency of the climate. Perhaps had they been properly cared for, they would have succeeded ; but Russian energy and perseverance have proved insufficient in obviating the effects of the severe snow-storms of winter and the droughts of summer, and the merinos are fast vanishing off the face of the earth. In 1849 a vast mortality prevailed ; and through utter want of management on the part of the proprietors, and careless indolence on the part of the shepherds, thousands of these valuable animals were sacrificed. Unless merinos be properly housed and fed during winter, it is absurd to think of rearing them on the steppes of Russia ; indeed, the fact seems pretty well established, that to have fine wool you must have a fine climate. Those hardy flocks which can endure a Russian winter, yield a wool that is barely worth exporting.

In Taurida, and the country of the Don Cossacks, the flocks are more numerous than in any other part of the empire, and they are proportionably ill cared for, the whole object being to increase the quantity of sheep, not the quality of the wool ; and thus it goes

on deteriorating in proportion as the flock multiplies. To add to which, the wool, being badly cleaned, and worse packed, does not realise much more than half the price of German wool in the London market, while it is being altogether superseded by that from Australia.

A steamer leaves Taganrog twice a-month for Odessa, performing the voyage in ten days. A glance at the map will show that in any other country the passage would not occupy three.

Owing to the numerous detentions we had experienced at post-huts during the latter part of our journey, we missed the boat by two days. As we proposed exploring the Crimea, we found, to attain this object, three courses open to us;—either a long journey by land to Simpheropol, a prospect which was particularly unpleasant, after all we had just undergone,—a residence in Taganrog until the next steamer, involving a delay of twelve days, and an extremely hot, uninteresting time,—or a passage in a merchantman to Kertch, if we should be fortunate enough to find a ship ready to sail. We chose the latter alternative, and forthwith made our wants known to the sea-faring community. Through the kindness and hospitality of the English consul, we had less difficulty than might have been anticipated in passing our time agreeably in a town destitute in itself of more than a limited supply of novelty and amusement.

CHAPTER XIII.

TAGANROG AS A PORT — THE WHEAT TRADE — WANT OF LABOUR —
THE PROHIBITIVE SYSTEM — ITS EFFECTS — FLUCTUATION IN THE
PRICE OF CORN — THE CAUSE OF IT — SUPPLIES FROM INDIA.

NOTWITHSTANDING the present increasing trade and population of Taganrog, I do not think that its prosperity is at all of a permanent character. The harbour is one of the most inconvenient in Europe, and has by degrees become so shallow that ships are obliged to anchor at a distance of twelve or fifteen miles from the shore. There seems no doubt that it is rapidly filling up. So recently as the year 1793, Professor Pallas records the launch of a large frigate upon waters that lighters can now with difficulty navigate.

As if nature were not doing enough to ruin Taganrog as a port, almost every ship that arrives contributes something to the same end. The Russian government has strictly prohibited the throwing overboard of ballast, with which the majority of the vessels that annually visit it are laden; and the custom-house officials are enjoined to see that this order is complied with, by measuring the draught of water of every ship at Kertch, and comparing it

with that which she requires upon her arrival at Taganrog. Of course, by this regulation government has only supplied a new source of profit to the customs' officers, without in the least attaining the object desired. A bribe at Kertch, in proportion to the amount of ballast to be discharged, has the instantaneous effect of lightening the ship ; so that after she has thrown overboard a cargo of stones at the entrance of the Taganrog harbour, her draught is found to correspond, with singular exactness, to the measurement taken at Kertch ; and thus the expense which would have been incurred by landing the ballast, is reduced to the more moderate sum to which the bribe may have amounted. The consequence of this system is, that the destruction of the harbour will proceed in exact proportion to the increase of the trade and mercantile importance of the town, until it becomes so eminently prosperous that no ship will be able to approach it at all.

But there are other reasons why Taganrog seems to me to have reached the culminating point of its prosperity. The new port of Berdianski threatens to prove a most formidable rival, as it affords facilities for discharging and loading cargo unequalled by any other harbour in the Sea of Azov. It is situated at the mouth of the Berda, and ships of considerable tonnage can lie close in-shore. Marianopol, too, is a large Greek colony, and though not possessing any great advantage as a port, it contains

an indefatigable population. Indeed, to the mercantile skill and enterprise of the Greeks is to be attributed that increasing importance which the corn trade of the southern provinces of Russia has recently assumed. A new port was established four years ago at Gheïsk, upon the eastern coast of the Sea of Azov ; not that its existence need cause any apprehension to Taganrog, for government seems to have chosen, as an eligible site for this town, the only bay which is filling up more rapidly even than that of Taganrog.

The most striking feature in the trade of these ports is the prominent position which the description of wheat known by the name of Ghirka is now beginning to occupy in the London market, to the exclusion of the Polish Odessa—a preference which will incalculably benefit the countries bordering upon the Sea of Azov, where alone it is produced. Mr Mongredien says, “A few years ago red Polish Odessa wheat formed by far the largest bulk of our imports from that quarter ; it now barely constitutes a third. Ghirka wheats from Marianopol, Berdianski, Taganrog, and other places, have last year been imported very largely—viz., about 350,000 quarters, against 100,000 quarters in 1851. This class of wheat is daily becoming better known amongst millers ; and whereas its use was once chiefly confined to Cork, Limerick, and the adjacent districts, it is now getting into general repute.” It may be remarked, however, that the general decrease of this year

the trouble to work, have occasionally earned as much as one silver ruble a-day each.

The thousands half starving in many parts of the country, who are not altogether bound down as serfs to a particular locality, are unable to migrate to this land of plenty, on account of the system which obliges them to invest their all in a passport to bring them here, and, when they have made a little money, to spend their savings in bribes to government officials, for more passports to take them back again to their own district, from which they may not be absent above a limited time ; while the journey there and back would most probably occupy a considerable period, if it were not altogether impracticable for persons in their condition. But in addition to these political hindrances, the besotted and apathetic disposition of the Russian peasant, at any rate, permits him to rest content with what is barely sufficient to keep body and soul together ; while in the numerous fast-days which his religion imposes, he finds abundant excuse for gratifying his indolent nature. Thus do the government and church of Russia combine to retard the advancement of the country ; and instead of fostering those vast resources with which nature has blessed the land, they seem intent only upon adding to the obstacles which she has opposed to its prosperity. What reasonable motive can we assign for those enormous guild-dues to which merchants are subjected, and which seem imposed expressly to discourage the existence of such

located as colonists. With characteristic energy and perseverance, they opened up a trade with the shores of the Black Sea ; and the produce of these provinces poured into a market in which the demand has ever been increasing, whilst other countries are only now beginning to discover their own internal resources, and their ability successfully to compete with Russia.

The Danubian provinces are already feeling their way into this lucrative trade, with telling effect. At the same time, we must not overlook the enormous extent of virgin soil in the south of Russia, capable of bearing, under a proper system of cultivation, almost enough grain to support the whole population of Europe ; while in the interior, labour is cheap, or altogether forced—and thus the price of grain should *apparently* be kept low.

A closer consideration of this question proves, however, that the disadvantages attending servitude counterbalance those advantages which at first sight it seems to confer upon the proprietor. It differs materially from slavery in its effect upon agricultural operations, since the serf is possessed of a portion of land upon which he is entitled to bestow a certain amount of labour ; and this is one of the causes which combine to produce the following practical result of serfdom—viz., the enormous fluctuation in the price of grain in the interior, which proves a most serious obstacle to the successful and extensive cultivation of the steppes of southern Russia and the Volga provinces.

In all other countries, the *intrinsic* value of an article, as distinguished from its marketable value, is calculated by the cost of its production ; and if the demand be not sufficiently extensive, and the prices of food not remunerating, the producer will cease to employ his capital and labour upon an unprofitable subject. But if, on the other hand, the demand is steady, a plentiful harvest is certain to reward him abundantly ; while, if the crops be poor, the prices rise to cover the greater proportionate expense thus incurred.

In Russia, an entirely different state of things obtains. A propitious season and abundant crops do not guarantee a profitable year to the Russian farmer. The prices may suddenly have fallen so low that no physical combination of circumstances can benefit him ; he is utterly unable to calculate the cost of production, and consequently unable to conjecture what would be a remunerating price. Where one part of the land is cultivated by the peasant on his own account, and another portion is cultivated by him for his proprietor, the capital employed, the rent of the land, and the work which is never paid for, become so confused that it is impossible for the farmer to have more than a general vague notion, at the end of the year, whether it has been a profitable one or not. He is thus the victim of circumstances. Totally unable to affect the price of grain himself, it depends upon the demand from foreign countries, the facilities of communication,

and his position with regard to them—with many other causes incidental to an immense but thinly-peopled country, affected in its extremities by the most different temperatures, liable during the same year to famine and plenty occurring in distant quarters, between which it is matter of pure hazard whether there exist any means of communication.

To provide against such contingencies, the government has established granaries, in which the grain of prosperous years is stored in true patriarchal style. In provinces dependent upon more highly-favoured districts for supplies, private speculators lay in stores, which often accumulate to such an extent that grain becomes even more plentiful than in the producing districts, where the price falls to an absurdly low figure. This is sometimes the case with the Volga provinces, where commercial arrangements are carried on in an original manner, and the inexperienced farmer is easily disconcerted. Thus, though the wheat may be produced at a comparatively small cost, it is quite possible for the farmer of serf-grown corn to be ruined; and he probably will be, if he does not keep pace with the times, and obtain some idea of the relations subsisting between the price his grain fetches in the market, and the cost of its production. At any rate, he will discover the disadvantage under which he labours, in comparison with those who can regulate the cost and extent of cultivation according to the demand.

But it will not, surely, always be the fate of

England to depend on foreign granaries alone. Is it so very extravagant to anticipate the day when she will cease to obtain corn from the shores of the Black Sea and the fertile provinces of America?—and when her own territories in the East—more abundantly prolific than either—will be intersected by railways, and yield an inexhaustible supply?—when a ship canal through the Isthmus of Suez will enable these precious cargoes to reach England in a state of preservation which is impossible under existing circumstances, since, during a passage of some months, in which the equator is twice crossed, the ravages of the weevil prove utterly destructive to grain?

When we compare the climate, soil, population, and resources of India with those of Russia, and contrast the commercial policy of the latter—so culpably Protectionist—with that of Britain, we cannot doubt the result of an enterprise so important as the formation of this canal, and are scarcely entitled to sneer at a government which does not connect the Volga and the Don, while we are deterred from carrying out a similar undertaking by difficulties which a future day will show to be not insurmountable.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE "BERTHA"—THE SEA OF AZOV—OUR ACCOMMODATION—A MERCANTILE RETROSPECT—ARRIVE AT YENI KALE—A CUSTOM-HOUSE OFFICIAL—EASTERN ASPECT OF THE TOWN—KERTCH: ITS HISTORICAL ASSOCIATIONS.

WE had ravenously devoured whole files of *Galig-nani*, supplied by the kindness of the English consul—explored every shop in the Gastinni Dvor—baked ourselves in the streets, and cooled ourselves on the ramparts—paid a visit to the governor, Prince Lieven, in his summer retreat—exhausted all the luxuries of the ill-managed hotel, which seemed to grow more and more comfortless as our recollection of civilisation revived—and before two days were over, were heartily sick of Taganrog. Under these circumstances it was welcome news to learn that the captain of a Prussian brig had been found, who offered to take us to Kertch, if we were prepared for an immediate start. We gladly closed with him upon his own terms, notwithstanding the impossibility of winding up our affairs satisfactorily upon such short notice, since it involved a forcible entry into the premises of the washerwoman, the seizure and packing of wet linen, and the abandonment of

our carriage. We had tried in vain to find a purchaser for that faithful vehicle, but everybody seemed to have carriages for sale at Taganrog, and of course nobody wanted to buy ours; so we included the original price in the posting expenses, and found, after all, that the cost of the journey had not been ruinous. Indeed, we were quite satisfied with having bought a carriage which had ever arrived at the journey's end at all, and had no reason to complain of being obliged to leave it where we no longer wanted it, instead of on the dreary steppe.

We were soon ready to accompany a deaf little German to the port, and, after a three-hours' sail, reached the brig, of which he styled himself captain, and which, wind and weather permitting, was to convey us to Kertch some time within the week. We accordingly proceeded to make ourselves comfortable in a hole there was under a ladder, and which was pervaded by a most unpleasant odour, containing an extremely greasy old couch, a very rickety table, an almanac, an orange, and a tumblerful of oil, to light up by night the only cabin in this filthy craft, which the skipper informed us, as he cast his eye over the accommodation with evident pride and satisfaction, was called the "Bertha," built at Königsberg, of two hundred and fifty tons burden, and laden with wool for Cork. So long as competition in the foreign carrying trade is confined to such arrant tubs as the Bertha, commanded by such careful old souls as our worthy friend and commander Kreplein, English

shipowners need suffer none of those qualms which have been already caused in anticipation by the alteration in the Navigation Laws, nor fear the lower rates of freight which in some instances are charged—though, as far as I could learn, in the case of the *Bertha* no reduction had been made. For no possible reason that I could divine, a few hours after leaving the roads we cast anchor, on a lovely night, with a full moon to show us the way, which was anything but difficult, and a fair wind to take us along it. However, we were too much accustomed to delays to be in the least affected by one so unimportant, and I soon forgot where I was, on the dirty floor of the cabin, which might possibly be my resting-place for so many nights to come.

For four days we went edging on through the thick pea-soupy substance, of which the water seems composed, literally ploughing our way through scum, and passing over every conceivable shade of green and yellow—for the Sea of Azov can never be accused of being blue. Still and turgid, in no part attaining a depth of more than forty-two feet, the ancients appreciated its true character more correctly than we do, when they called it a marsh. We were occasionally left almost sticking in this delectable pond by the light variable airs, which seemed to delight in baffling us; and we had nothing but cloudless days and moonlight nights to compensate for so monotonous an existence.

There was no room to walk the deck, which was

culate the chances of a spark consuming Kreplein, Wilhelm, pigs, and all.

We were generally surrounded by country craft, in company with which we glided lazily on, while occasionally the white sails flapped idly against the tapering masts of some English merchantman, probably the only vessel of the party who really grudged the delay. Time is no object to a Russian, and the steamer takes four days to perform the voyage to Kertch, a distance of one hundred and eighty miles, touching at Marianopol, Berdianski, and Gheïsk, and remaining a day at each place—for no particular reason, as far as I could learn from those who had been unlucky enough to make the passage.

How many phases has commerce passed through upon these waters, since the first Milesian fishing-stations were established upon their shores, and exported sturgeon to Greek gourmands, when Tanais was looked upon as an *Ultima Thule*, so little known that its very existence is now almost doubtful! Many centuries after its destruction, Venetian, Genoese, and Pisan galliots sailed side by side through the Cimmerian Bosphorus, freighted with the rich merchandise of the East, while colonists of the rival republics competed upon the banks of the Don for the monopoly of trade with the celebrated Golden Horde, who were in direct communication with Samarcand. These flourishing colonies in their turn disappeared, and now for three hundred years an occasional Turkish zebeck was the only craft that

crossed the sea to Azov, a fortress built on the ruins of Tana, and perhaps of Tanais.

At last a new power succeeded all these, and trade revived under circumstances altogether changed, owing its importance, not to the wealth of the East, but to the resources of the country surrounding this sea ; so that vessels which traverse it now are no longer freighted with silk from China, but with corn from Taurida ; and it is worthy of remark that, while the English have succeeded Greeks and Italians in monopolising, by a different route, their old Eastern trade, their ships also navigate in greater numbers than those of any other nation the once famous Palus Mæotis.

I was not sorry, on going on deck, after passing my fourth night in the close cabin, to find that we were anchored in the straits amid a host of shipping ; and I was still more delighted to hear that the boat was ready to take us ashore. We quitted the bluff-built Bertha without regret, carrying away with us only a grateful recollection of the hard ship-biscuit and excellent caviare which had formed the staple of our fare. Bread was a luxury unknown on board that primitive craft. The sun was rising behind the low land which forms the Asiatic shore of the Cimmerian Bosphorus, and brought out the lights and shadows of the old Turkish fortress of Yeni Kalè, the crumbling walls of which surmounted the steep cliffs that overhang the still more crumbling village at their base.

Here, in the very teeth of a most unsatisfactory-looking custom-house official in the garb of a Russian soldier, we landed, and prepared for the ordeal which, though we were only going from one Russian town to another, seemed inevitable. We were immediately commanded to deposit ourselves and our luggage under an old wall, and there to remain until the head of the custom-house should awake, for he was not to be disturbed on any account. As it was only 6 A.M., and Russian officials are not very conscientious in their punctuality to business, we took the liberty of disobeying the soldier, in spite of his fierce injunctions to the contrary, and walked to the house of the grand personage whose slumbers were so religiously protected. A knock brought a tall man to the door, who, with an agonised expression of countenance, and walking on the tips of his toes, made violent gesticulations expressive of silence. It was evident that his master was a most ferocious personage ; for when we whispered into his ear an order to awake him immediately, he started back in horror and amazement at the temerity which could suggest such a rash proceeding. Finding that our entreaties were useless, and that the man was becoming insolent, I suddenly beat a double rap with my cane, which would have done honour to a London footman, upon which his face assumed a persuasive expression, and he said something, by which I understood him to mean that he would wake his master for a ruble. This was, however, unnecessary, for in

are some celebrated mud-springs, which we did not visit.

A sort of omnibus, devoid of seats, and half filled with straw, now appeared, to which were harnessed a pair of mules, that could easily have been put inside. However, we trusted to their capacity, though they seemed most disproportionate to the work, and commenced jolting up the steep ascent by which we left the town. From the summit the view of Kertch, and the large bay in which it is situated, was very beautiful; the broken outline of the opposite hills projected far across the straits; while the houses of the town rose one above another up the steep side of the hill of Mithridates;—the whole reminding me of Naples, to which it certainly bears a humble resemblance.

It is about seven miles from Yeni Kalè to Kertch. The country is still of the steppe nature, undulating and grassy; while the numerous tumuli scattered over it promised to be interesting subjects of future explorations.

The hotel in which we took up our quarters formed one of a handsome row of houses which faced the quay, and gives the town a somewhat more imposing aspect from the sea than it deserves.

Kertch is almost the only town in Russia built entirely of stone, and the houses look handsome and substantial. We seemed to have quitted the country of wooden cottages and green roofs, as well as of red-bearded men, with sheepskin coats, and were not

sorry to be in a land where dwellings and people harmonised with the more genial temperature we now experienced. Kertch is one of the most interesting towns in the south of Russia to the antiquarian ;—the Panticapeum of Strabo, it was founded about the middle of the seventh century, B.C., by the first Milesian colonists in the Taurida, and two hundred years afterwards it became the capital of the kingdom of Bosphorus, and the residence of its kings.

For three hundred years the trade of Theodosia and Panticapea flourished, for the Cimmerian Peninsula had become the granary of Greece. The conquest of that nation by the Romans, however, produced an important effect upon this kingdom, since it was dependent for its prosperity upon a market, which would soon cease to exist ; and it fell an easy prey to Mithridates, at the same time that he subdued the rest of the Taurida.

To Panticapea the celebrated king of Pontus fled after his last defeat by Pompey, and here, unable to contend at once against the victorious arms of Rome and the treachery of his own son, he terminated his glorious career. And here it was that Pharnaces afterwards raised the standard of revolt, and Cæsar came, saw, and conquered him.

The successors of the son of Mithridates reigned only in accordance with the caprice of the Roman Emperors ; and their territory, after being frequently devastated by the Huns and the Goths, was finally conquered in 375, A.D., by those barbaric hordes

which ultimately subverted the whole civilised world, and various tribes of whom for a thousand years occupied the Tauric Peninsula. Amongst these, the Khazars were the most celebrated, who seem, at one time, to have considered Kertch a place of some importance, while a great part of the peninsula took the name of Khazaria from them. In the early part of the thirteenth century a great number of Circassians established themselves in the Crimea, and the town of Kertch became subject to a prince of that nation. It was about this time that the Genoese possessed themselves of the southern shore of the Crimea, and established a colony at Caffa, with the permission of the Khan of Khazaria, whose authority they were soon in a position to set at defiance, and with whom they waged an uncertain war, until Bathi, the grandson of Zingis Khan, leader of the Golden Horde, on his way from the deserts of Tartary to the conquest of Russia, invaded the Crimea, exterminated the Comanes who then possessed it, and the Tartar capital was fixed at Eski Krim.

In 1365 the Greek colony of Soudagh, which had at one time attained an important mercantile position, enfeebled by intestine disorders, fell a prey to that all-absorbing maritime power under which Caffa had become so celebrated. A hundred years afterwards these restless adventurers became embroiled with the nation who now occupied the peninsula, and to whom they owed their deliverance.

Their colonies were besieged by the Tartars by land, and blockaded by a fleet which the Porte had sent to the assistance of the Khans, who had become tributary to the Ottoman Empire. The destruction of the Genoese colonies was tantamount to an annihilation of commerce in these seas.

For three hundred years the Cimmerian Bosphorus remained closed, and the ruins of once flourishing cities lay strewn upon its shores.



Crim Tartars



The Tchatir Dagh.

CHAPTER XV.

KERTCH : ITS DISADVANTAGES AS A PORT—TUMULI—STEPPE CULTIVATION—A TARTAR CONVEYANCE — NO SOMOVAR—AN AMUSING INTERPRETER — A RAILWAY TO THEODOSIA : ITS PROSPECTS — A STEPPE APPARITION—A MIDNIGHT SCENE—KARASSU BAZAAR—APPROACH TO SIMPHEROPOL.

KERTCH had dwindled into a Turkish town of little importance when it was ceded to Russia by the Porte in the year 1774 ; but the ancient capital of the Bosphorus was destined soon to regain some of its former greatness, though at the sacrifice of those Italian colonies which had more recently engrossed the whole trade of the peninsula, and which remain to this day monuments of that adventurous spirit of commercial enterprise which called them into existence.

For some Russian reason, incomprehensible to

common sense, the tribune of commerce was transferred from Theodosia, a town advantageously situated at the head of a deep capacious harbour, which is never frozen, to the shores of these straits, which are closed for four months of the year, where the anchorage is dangerous and the water shallow. Here every ship must remain and perform a four days' quarantine. The larger ones wait until their cargoes arrive from Taganrog or Rostof, in lighters ; while those drawing less water cross the bar, and proceed to load at Taganrog. On their return, it becomes necessary to transfer half their cargoes into lighters at Yeni Kalè, and drop down the shallow straits to Kertch, to re-load—a proceeding which affords a rich harvest to a rapacious crew of Greek lightermen resident at the former place.

All this may be very profitable to Kertch, but it is extremely expensive to the public. For instance, supposing the produce to be Siberian iron which has descended the Don to Rostof, it is there put into lighters, and conveyed, sixty miles, to Taganrog, where it is duly landed ; and when the right vessel arrives, and anchors fifteen miles from the shore, it must be put on board by means of lighters again. In two days after she has been loaded in this expensive way at Taganrog, the ship probably reaches Yeni Kalè, where the process I have already described takes place, and thus the cargo has been subject to five transhipments before it can be fairly said to have left the Russian shores.

Rather than continue this absurd system, it would be better to construct a railway from Rostof to Kertch, down the eastern coast of the Sea of Azov, through the level country of the Cossacks of the Black Sea, and thus effectually terminate the existence of Taganrog, which only lives a sort of excrescence upon Rostof.

It is most unfortunate that a government which so seldom does a bit of patriotism should have misplaced its affections upon two such worthless objects as Taganrog and Kertch—that it should have fostered and protected so carefully towns which had far better never have existed. Had Rostof and Theodosia been treated in a similar manner, the price of articles exported from these shores would be incalculably diminished ; for Theodosia would become an emporium for the produce not only of the Don, but of all the minor ports upon the Sea of Azov ; and a vast number of small Russian craft would have been employed in concentrating freight, during the fine season, at the most highly-favoured port which Russia possesses, since it is the only one available for commercial purposes throughout the year.

That the trade of this part of the world is rapidly on the increase, is apparent from the fact that no less than one thousand vessels entered the straits of Kertch in the year 1851. It is but fair to say that the port dues, and expenses attendant on passing through the straits, are very trifling, and consist chiefly in bribes to petty officials. Unfortunately,

nature has done more towards blocking up the entrance of the Sea of Azov than the government could ever have hoped to effect, even though it once established a thirty days' quarantine at Kertch, in its ardent desires to benefit that town.

During our short stay in Kertch we were much indebted to the kindness and hospitality of the English consul, Mr Catley, with whom we drove over to inspect one of the most remarkable of the tumuli which has hitherto been opened.

The stone gallery, which is thirty-six yards long and about twenty feet high, leads to a square mausoleum, surmounted by a cupola. The whole structure, which was extremely massive, reminded me forcibly of the Cyclopean remains at Tiryns and Mycenæ. In some of these tumuli sarcophagi have been found, and their interesting contents sent either to the museum at St Petersburg, or they are preserved in the little Temple of Theseus, which, situated on the Hill of Mithridates, is appropriated to the same purpose here.

As we crossed the steppe on our way back, it was melancholy to see thousands of acres of magnificent soil, capable of bearing the finest crops in the world, destined to remain uncultivated until the agricultural population of Russia are free to transplant themselves to those parts of the empire which offer the highest inducements, and where a new stock is wanted to replace the aboriginal Tartars, who are rapidly vanishing off the face of the earth.

It is difficult to account for this decay of a race, in a rich country absolutely lying waste for want of labour. Undoubtedly the colonisation of a territory by a civilised and industrious people has invariably led to the decrease and ultimate extermination of the original owners of the soil, where there has not been room for the two races to exist contemporaneously ; but this can hardly be said to be the case in the Crimea. The barbarous Slaves could scarcely boast a greater degree of refinement than the Tartar tribe whose country they became possessed of ; while there remains still ample room for double their united population to live in plenty. The want of water is an evil only consequent upon the want of enterprise and labour sufficient to irrigate a soil which has proved itself second to none in Europe, since the buckwheat of Kertch carried off the prize at the Great Exhibition in London ; nor can justice ever be done to the Crimea while the obstacles are even greater to foreigners holding land than to Russians immigrating for the purpose of tilling it. By a recent ukase, no foreigner is allowed to hold one rood of land without becoming naturalised a Russian subject—a penalty for which, in the present state of things, nothing could compensate but a most certain and magnificent remuneration.

Kertch contains a population of ten thousand inhabitants, exporting only a little salt to some of the Russian ports. It is destitute, at present, of all in-

trinsic resources, and owes its prosperity to a policy which has ruined Theodosia, and immeasurably retarded commerce upon the Sea of Azov.

Our former experience of posting had been sufficiently disagreeable to determine us to avoid it for the future if possible, and so we engaged an exceedingly apathetic-looking Tartar to convey us to Simpheropol, a distance of one hundred and thirty miles, in two days, with his own vehicle and horses. Accordingly, towards evening, a long green conveyance, very much resembling a carrier's cart, appeared at the door, drawn by three diminutive rats of ponies. It was



Our Tartar Waggon.

so perfectly full of straw as to appear not intended for the reception of anything else. However, we found that, after our luggage was stowed away, a remarkably comfortable bed remained for ourselves; and I was soon snugly buried in the straw, insensible alike to fleas and jolting, which my fellow-traveller told me in the morning had both been very trying. We soon found that, however eccentric might have been the appearance of our nags, they were none the less high-mettled. Our way lay over nothing but steppe, in no respect differing from the

country of the Don Cossacks, except in being less undulating.

Here, at the different post-stations, the bluff Cossack was either exchanged for the indolent Tartar, or we were left without postmaster, and consequently without somovar at all. We found, to our consternation, that this was the case in a village that externally promised great things, having just accomplished seventy-five miles in a little more than twenty hours, and beginning to feel that a substantial meal had become necessary. The house which should have been devoted to the entertainment of man and beast, consisted of but two rooms, and was converted into a store for Indian corn, to insure the safety of which doors and windows had been carefully barred. The Tartar wisely carried his own and his horse's food with him. He had breakfasted off a huge watermelon and a hunch of black bread, and he was now dining off precisely similar fare. After our experience of this fruit, it was frightful to contemplate him thus engaged.

Fortunately we observed a respectable-looking mansion, and, boldly invading it, met with a cordial reception from the owner, who was evidently the squire of the place, but who was totally at a loss to divine who we were or what we wanted, until a little wizened old Frenchman suddenly appeared, and bowed himself into the office of interpreter. His success in that capacity was soon manifest, for our host vanished, and shortly afterwards a steaming somovar

made its appearance, together with a bottle of excellent Crim wine and some delicious fruit, upon which, with the addition of our own stores, we made a satisfactory repast, while the little Frenchman enlivened us with his account of a visit he had made to England with Talleyrand (probably as his valet), and plied us with incessant questions as to the prospects of Louis Napoleon, and the present state of Paris, which he had not seen for thirty years. Poor old man, he was in utter ignorance of what was going on in the rest of the world, except in as far as the little Odessa newspaper supplied him with information. His present position was that of tutor to the sons of our host. That worthy individual soon after came back to us, accompanied by two unruly boys—we had observed his wife looking through a chink in the door at the unusual visitors—and commenced a conversation by an abrupt inquiry if shares in an English railway were purchased from a private company or from the crown. Upon this a discussion ensued as to our mode of managing such matters, which was somewhat confused, from the fact of our interpreter often mixing up admonitions to his pupils with the description he was giving us of a proposed line of railway from Moscow to Theodosia, which he delivered in some such fragmentary way as this: "Monsieur says, in answer to your question—why do you keep opening and shutting the door in that way, Ivan?—that the principal article is salt, for the conveyance of which from the Crimea into the inte-

rior of Russia this line would be employed—you are not the *concierge*,—but Prince Woronzoff has given it his decided opposition. He maintains that such a line would ruin Kertch, which is a far more important consideration than the welfare of the country at large—don't titter and grin, Alexis, I have said nothing for any one to laugh at,—therefore there is no chance of a proposal for this railroad being favourably regarded by government."

Our host was evidently deeply interested in this scheme. He owned large salt-pans in the neighbourhood, and the line would necessarily pass through a great portion of his property. I was much struck with the reasons he urged in support of the superiority of this line over the one from Moscow to Odessa, which I see has since been determined on. The most palpable advantage which Theodosia possesses over all other Russian harbours, with the single exception of Sevastopol—which is devoted entirely to naval purposes—is one to which I have before alluded, viz., that it remains unfrozen all the year round. Situated in the midst of the garden of Russia, it possesses attractions denied to any other port in the kingdom; and its former opulence, as the centre of the commerce on the Black Sea, goes far to show that at the present day it would be a fitting terminus to so important a railway. The wines and the fruits of the southern coast would be thus conveyed into the interior, in addition to all those European importa-

tions necessary to render life tolerable in so barbarous and inclement a country.

But so long as government neglects such evident advantages, from an absurd dread of injuring two or three pet towns, it is checking the national prosperity, and must therefore in the long-run be found indirectly to have retarded the very towns it is thus improperly seeking to protect. However, as I remarked to our interested friend, it is useless to discuss the propriety of particular lines of railway in a country where the public is not allowed a voice in the matter. Perhaps, poor man, when he got his railway, he would not be allowed to send his salt by it ; and it is yet to be proved whether a railway will pay, passing through a country which is not intersected in any one direction by a macadamised road, so that there are no lateral means of communication by which consumers and producers can conveniently convey their goods to and from the line. At least it will answer the great end and object of a rapid conveyance of soldiers and despatches ; and the merchants at Odessa, as loyal subjects, will no doubt be quite contented with a goods-train to Moscow, about once a-week, upon payment of the proper bribes to the managers.

We were journeying over tracts of wild thyme, grumbling at the tameness of the scenery, the solitude of the way, and the intensely hot weather, when we saw indistinctly shadowed, amid clouds of dust, a colossal apparition moving slowly and majes-

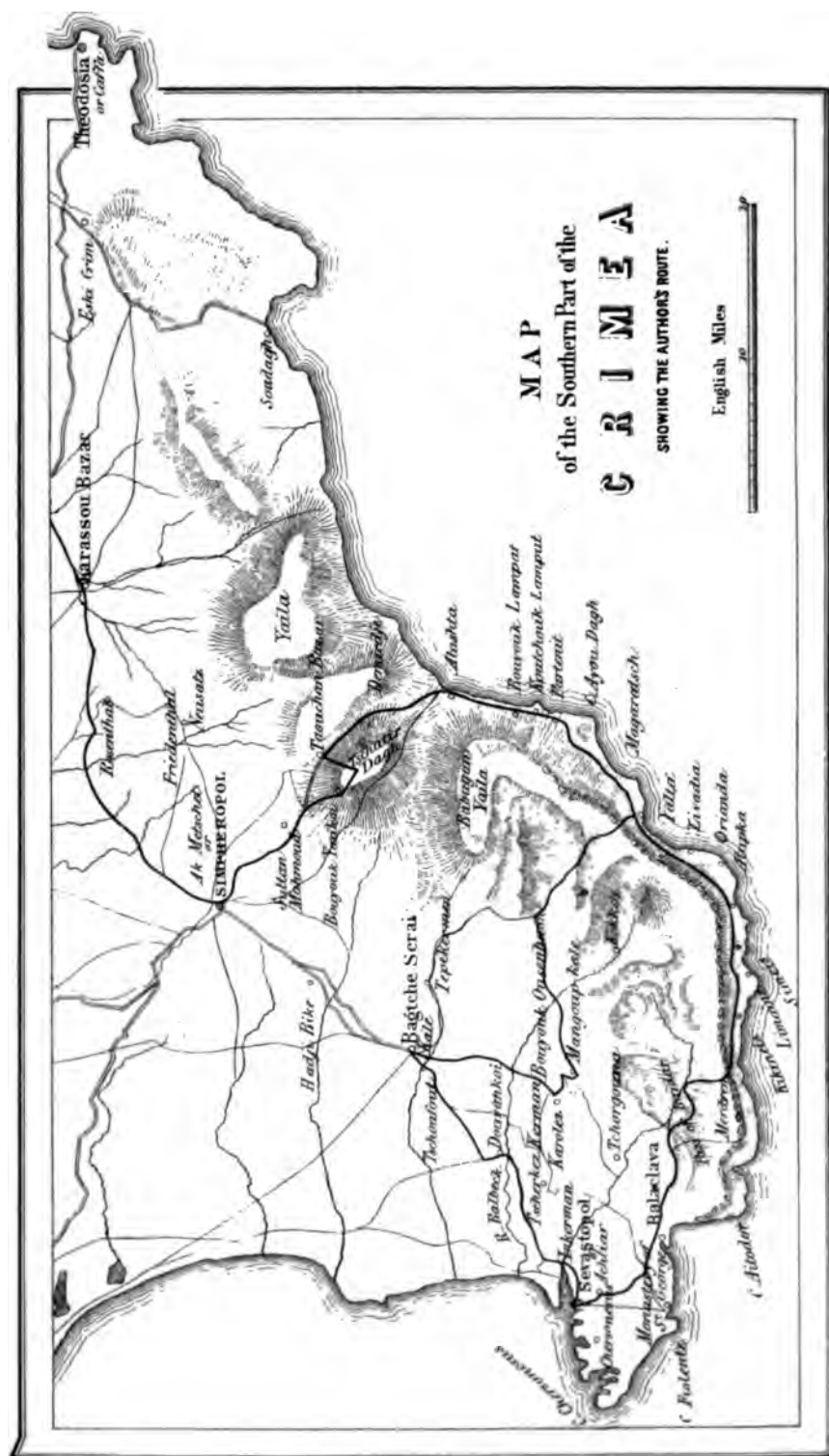
tically towards us. Utterly at a loss to conceive what monsters of the steppe we were approaching, we were delighted to trace the uncouth forms of two camels, drawing an enormous wicker-work covered cart, which contained a group of Tartars. We had hardly time to observe the strange appearance which this novel mode of travelling presented, when we were passed, and shrouded in our respective columns of dust, lost to each other's gaze as suddenly as we had emerged upon it. It was a *rencontre*—the more striking from being totally unexpected—so thoroughly in keeping with the scene, that the feeling of loneliness which I had experienced before, seemed to have been increased tenfold by this silent meeting with these wanderers of the desert.

We drove through great flocks of bustards, who manifested the utmost unconcern at our approach, merely moving aside like tame pigeons, and stalking amid the thin dry grass, as if they considered it extreme impudence in us to disturb them in the quiet possession of their own territory. I afterwards found that roast bustard was a common dish at the hotels in the Crimea, and it proved excellent fare.

Hitherto, almost the only inequalities which I had observed upon the level surface of the steppe had been composed of piles of water-melons. Those alone who have endured steppe travelling for a lengthened period, can conceive our sensations on seeing at last the beautiful irregular outline of the distant mountains, clear against the red evening sky;

for we hailed them as affording a prospect, not only of a change from our present mode of travelling, but of really fine scenery only waiting to be explored.

About half-past two in the morning, I was awakened by a violent jolt, and found we were trying, with our long unwieldy equipage, to turn two corners at once, in the narrow winding streets of a Tartar town, and had naturally enough failed in the attempt. Still I was thankful to the curb-stone that had roused me, from not the most tranquil of slumbers, to a due appreciation of one of those scenes which occasionally break upon the monotony of a journey, and fully compensate to the weary traveller for the discomfort and fatigues of many days. The tortuous streets among which we were entangled, lit up here and there by the faint light of a waning moon, were pitchy dark, where the quaint old houses approached so near as almost to touch one another. The broad verandahs, casting deep shadows in every direction, seemed as silent as if the empty stalls under their eaves had never been occupied by living soul ; not a solitary bark gave warning to the sleeping inhabitants of our presence ; and I was wondering whether these were not the deserted habitations of a race gone by, when suddenly, from one of the dark mysterious avenues, in uniform and silent procession, marched, two and two, a body of bearded men, whose long robes and measured tread added an imposing solemnity to their occupation, which might well have been that of bewailing a people of whom



they were the only survivors. Each man was distinctly visible for a moment, as he passed through a gleam of the moonlight; and so, without the sound of a footfall, the whole procession slowly vanished, and we were left to pursue our lonely way over the desolate steppe. Many hours after, I awoke to the realities of a miserable post-hut, and could scarcely believe that the spectral view I had obtained of an Armenian funeral in the old Tartar town of Karassu Bazaar was not a dream.

Karassu Bazaar is one of the largest and most characteristic of Crimean towns, containing a population of nearly fifteen thousand inhabitants. It is advantageously situated for commercial purposes; and the industrious Jews and Armenians, who, together with Tartars, compose the population, carry on extensive manufactures in morocco leather, soap, candles, &c.

The Kara Su, or black-water river, runs past the town, and through a fertile valley which grows great quantities of grain and tobacco; while the extensive pasture-lands of the surrounding steppes enable the inhabitants to maintain large herds of cattle. Near this spot the gallant Potemkin erected a palace, expressly for the reception of the Empress Catharine, who was thus surprised to find herself surrounded by all the luxuries of civilised life in this remote corner of her empire.

On the left of the post road from Karassu Bazaar

to Simpheropol, and not many miles distant, are situated numerous German colonies, which have been placed upon the slopes of the mountains in the upper part of the rich valleys with which the country now begins to be continually intersected. The northern course of each rivulet was distinctly marked by a narrow belt of wood.

We had accomplished a hundred and twenty-five miles in thirty-seven hours with the same horses. The Tartar was in continual danger of dropping off his box, fatigued with hunting along his team through two consecutive nights ; and the whole party were equally tired of the journey, when, after climbing up a steep ravine, the new Russian capital of the Crimea lay spread at our feet, as beautiful as it was a welcome sight. The fertile valley of the Salghir, winding from the base of the Tchatir Dag, here expanded into a richly cultivated plain, where the white houses and handsome churches of Simpheropol seemed half buried amid luxuriant vegetation. To the left the Tchatir Dag raised its imposing crest, to a height of five thousand feet, standing boldly out, as if unwilling to acknowledge any connection with the adjoining range. In shape it reminded me of Table Mountain at the Cape of Good Hope.

The cheering effects of this delightful prospect were soon manifest, alike upon ourselves, the Tartar, and the horses. The latter, sniffing their journey's end, took advantage of a gentle slope, and started off

at a gallop—the Tartar vented approving shouts of their conduct—while we shook ourselves out of the dust and straw as we dashed into the valley, along avenues of tapering poplars, and terminated, with inexpressible satisfaction, our last experience of steppe travelling.



Camel-Cart.

decorated with very green paint. If the population consisted entirely of Russians, the interior of the town would be as far from realising the expectations which its outward appearance is calculated to produce, as Kazan or Saratov ; but fortunately for Simpheropol, it was once Akmetchet, or "The White Mosque," and the inhabitants of Akmetchet still linger near the city of their ancestors, and invest the cold monotony of the new capital with an interest of which it would be otherwise quite unworthy.

Formerly the second town in the Crimea, and the residence of the Kalga Sultan, or vice-Khan, Akmetchet was a city of great importance, adorned with palaces, mosques, and public baths. It has now exchanged the Eastern magnificence of former days for the tawdry glitter of Muscovite barbarism.

About five thousand Tartars inhabit exclusively one quarter of the town, and thither we bent our steps, under the guidance of an intelligent German watchmaker, who officiated as cicerone during our stay at Simpheropol with great kindness, neglecting the duties of his shop for the pleasure of lionising the "distinguished" strangers.

The streets inhabited by Tartars are composed entirely of blank walls, and would, therefore, be the dullest places imaginable were it not for the people who traverse them. The houses are only one storey high, and each is enclosed in a separate courtyard. The parchment windows which look out into it are placed so low as to be quite hidden from the street;

and so the unfortunate females have not the ordinary amusement of Eastern ladies, and no black eyes glance out of latticed windows upon the passenger as he passes beneath them. The Tartar women of Akmetchet, however, do not lose much by their seclusion. The streets have none of the life and bustle of a town like Cairo. The shops are few and far between, very small and poor, and kept by ugly unveiled women. The beauties walk about covered up to the eyes with the white "fereedjè," which reaches as low as the knee. Were it not for the bright-coloured skirt which flutters beneath it, and the loose drawers that fall over tiny yellow boots, they would look precisely like animated bundles of white linen. The men occasionally wear the turban and flowing robe of the true Oriental ; but their costumes, always picturesque, vary so much as to be almost indescribable.

We soon got tired of wandering through this maze of narrow lanes, always confined between high blank walls, and changed the scene by suddenly coming upon the fashionable promenade, where the band was playing in cool delicious gardens to the gay world, who delight to assemble here and stroll upon the banks of the Salghir, away from the heat and dust of the town. The present governor, Pestal, a brother to "Yes, it comes at last," is, I understand, in high favour with the Emperor. His house is a substantial handsome-looking mansion. There are extensive barracks situated a little outside the town,

but the hospital alone is always in use ; the rest of the building is only occupied occasionally by troops passing to and from the Caucasus. There are no less than two hotels in Simpheropol, and in the one we were at they actually gave us a sheet each, but, of course, no means of washing. Our windows looked out upon the principal street, and were always interesting posts of observation. Sometimes a lumbering nobleman's carriage, piled with luggage, and stored with provisions for a month, rattled into the town—the family being about to return to St Petersburg for the winter, after spending the summer at their country seat in the Crimea ; or an unpretending vehicle, exactly similar to ours, jogged quietly past, crammed with Armenian merchants, some of whose legs, protruding from between the curtains, were presumed to belong to Armenians, from the perfume of Turkish tobacco which was diffused over the street during their transit ; or a file of camel-carts, filled with straw, moved sedately along, stopping every now and then for a few moments while the drivers spoke to friends, when all the camels lay down ; no amount of experience seemed to show them that it was hardly worth while to do this, considering how soon they would have to get up again, and the great exertion it involved. Accustomed only to the camels and dromedaries of still more Eastern countries, the appearance of this Bactrian camel was quite new to me. The two humps are generally so long, that, unable to sustain them-

selves, they fall over, and often hang down on each side of the animal's back. The neck and legs are covered with long thick hair, from which the Tartar women weave cloth of a soft woolly texture.

In strong contrast to these singular carts, pert droskies were continually dashing about. Though so small and light, all the public droskies here have two horses, generally very good ones, while the heat of the sun has rendered it necessary that they should, for the most part, be supplied with hoods; so that the atrocious little vehicle of St Petersburg is converted at Simpheropol into quite a respectable conveyance. Next door to our hotel was rather a handsome Jewish synagogue, in which school seemed perpetually going on. Simpheropol contains about fourteen thousand inhabitants, of which comparatively a large proportion are members of this persuasion.

Fortunately the annual fair, which takes place in the first week of October, was being held during the period of our stay, and then it is that the greatest variety of costume, and all the characteristic features of the Crimea, are most opportunely collected for the traveller's benefit. To be properly appreciated, the fair of Nijni Novgorod should be seen before that of Simpheropol, which we found infinitely more striking, perhaps because we were completely taken by surprise when, quite unaware of its existence, we chanced to enter the market-place one afternoon. It is seldom that two races so widely differing in manners and customs, springing from origins so dis-

tinct, are brought into everyday contact in such a palpable manner as in Crim Tartary ; and this mixture is the more interesting from the improbability of its existing very long in its present unnatural condition. An enormous square, many acres in extent, contained an indiscriminate mass of booths, camels, carts, droskies, oxen, and picturesque groups. Here may be seen the red-bearded Russian mujik, in jack-boots and sheepskin, in close confabulation with a gaily dressed Tartar, who has just galloped across the steppe, and who sits his horse as if he were part and parcel of him. He wears a large white fur-cap, a red striped embroidered jacket, fitting close to his body, with wide open sleeves, while his loose dark blue trousers are girded with a bright-coloured sash, amid the folds of which the massive handle of his dagger appears, and his slippered feet are thrust into clumsy stirrups at the ends of very long leathers. His horse is a wiry little animal, possessing an infinitely greater amount of intelligence than beauty. Farther on among the crowd, and distinguished by his green turban, floats the robe of some pious Hadjè ; nor does he seem in the least scandalised by two young ladies in a drosky, not only devoid of fereedjè, but even of bonnets, and wearing only the jaunty little caps of the Parisian grisette. We might very fairly suggest, however, the propriety of their profiting, in some degree, from the example of the muffled females over the way, who seem afraid to expose to the profane gaze of men the dyed tips of their finger nails.

In the narrow lanes formed by carts and tents, Greeks, in a no less gay though somewhat different costume from that usually worn in their own country, are haggling with Russian Jews in long black beards, and long black cloaks reaching down to their ankles. It is an even bet who will have the best of such a bargain. Savage-looking Nogays, and Cossack soldiers, are making purchases from Armenian or German shopkeepers. There are large booths, like gypsies' huts magnified, which have no connection with the ragged representatives of that wandering race who swarm at the fair, but which contain quantities of most tempting fruit, huge piles of apricots, grapes, peaches, apples, and plums, of any of which one farthing will buy more than the purchaser can conveniently carry away with him. Besides these booths, there are heavy carts, with wicker-work sides and ungreased angular wheels, which make that incessant and discordant creaking familiar to those who have ever heard a Bengal bullock-hackery. Presiding over the whole scene, not in the least disconcerted by the uncongenial forms which surround them, are hundreds of camels, in all sorts of positions, chewing the cud with Eastern philosophy, and perfectly submissive to very small ragged Tartar boys, who seem to have entire charge of them, and who do not reach higher than their knees. Rows of shops enclosed this miscellaneous assemblage, containing saddles, knives, whips, slippers, tobacco-pouches, and morocco-leather boots, all of Tartar manufacture,

besides every description of European article. It was some satisfaction to feel, as we moved through the busy throng, in plaid shooting-coats with mother-of-pearl buttons, that we too were adding another variety to the motley costumes of the fair at Simpheropol.

But the charm of Simpheropol does not consist in the variety of races which inhabit it. Though it seems to lie in a plain, as approached from Kertch, a great part of the town is situated upon the precipitous edge of the steppe, from whence a magnificent view is obtained immediately below; and at the foot of abrupt rocks, two hundred feet high, runs the tiny Salghir, dignified with the name of a river, and, if not entitled to it from its size, worthy the appellation by reason of the lovely valley which it has formed in its northern course. Orchards and gardens, containing every sort of fruit-trees, and abounding in rows of tall poplars, line its banks, until the hills, becoming higher and more thickly wooded, form a ridge, which is connected with the Tchatir Dag, a noble background, and one which does full justice to this lovely picture. Nor did a closer acquaintance with the details of this view detract from our original impressions on beholding it.

We determined to take advantage of the glorious weather with which we were favoured, to make the ascent of the Tchatir Dag, the Mountain of the Tent of the Tartars, Trapezus of the Greeks, and Palata Gora of the Russians. As mountains are

rarities in Russia, a great many preparations were considered necessary before starting upon the expedition. Sending our luggage in a cart to a post-station on the road to Alushta, we hired a Tartar and three horses, and, accompanied by an excellent German, who acted as interpreter, we bid adieu to Simpheropol on a lovely afternoon, and rode up the valley shaded by the avenues we had admired from above, frequently crossing the stream, and every here and there coming upon some charming little nook, of which a picturesque cottage had taken advantage, and which, perhaps, we appreciated the more highly after our long journeys across the steppe, so totally devoid of cottages, gardens, streams, or trees. We passed through orchards, and between fields of tobacco, Indian corn, flax, and millet ; and after following the main road to Alushta for nine miles, turned off at Sultan Mahmout, and proceeding some miles across country, reached, a little after dark, the Tartar village of Bouyouk Yankoi, in which we had determined to spend the night before commencing the ascent of the mountain.

Dismounting before a very low verandah, we entered a sort of hut by a hole about three feet square, and passing through a small room and another hole, found ourselves in a somewhat more spacious apartment, carpeted with thick white felt. Raised about six inches above the floor, a sort of divan extended all round the room, above which were suspended quantities of richly embroidered

cloths used as handkerchiefs or towels. I bought a very handsome one of these, with an Arabic inscription upon it, for a ruble. Upon a shelf at the further end were piled gold and silver brocades, while, hardly corresponding with such handsome garniture, earthenware vessels were ranged upon the massive beams which supported the roof, and which were placed so low that the members of the household could reach them easily, and unwary strangers knock their heads against them continually. A great many bunches of wild thyme were hanging from the rafters, but they by no means answered the purpose of overcoming the strong smell of garlic which floated round everybody and pervaded everything. We were delighted with the comfortable air of the whole establishment—nothing could have looked cleaner than the white walls, or softer than the white felt; but we had not as yet experienced one property peculiar to the latter. A very small window, with wooden bars, and touching the ground, was opposite a large old-fashioned sort of fireplace, in which an ox might have been roasted whole, and which completed the unique appearance of our quarters. Instead of the somovar, small filigree cups of thick coffee were furnished by our host, whose wife was too old and ugly to make it necessary for her to cover her face. She piled mattresses and pillows for us upon the divan in abundance, and we were soon stretched luxuriously round the room on the soft cushions, heedless of their garlicky per-

fume. Would that *it* had been our only annoyance—the fleas had evidently been waiting until we were well in their power, and now transferred themselves in thousands from the felt to our bodies. How little did I imagine, when I watched the old Tartar dame preparing the tempting beds, that I should toss restlessly upon them the livelong night.

Fortunately we had purposed an early start on the morrow, and were delighted to quit our downy couches at three o'clock. After another cup of coffee and a gratuity to our host, who declined to take anything until his better half interposed, we again mounted our ponies, and by the light of a very small moon, picked our way up the stony path under the guidance of two Tartars from the village. For about two hours we wound through beech-woods—in which there is said to be very good red-deer shooting—and along narrow ridges overlooking extensive valleys. Upon arriving at the last steep pitch, we left our horses with one of the guides, and clambered up amongst strewn rocks and stunted juniper-bushes for another hour, when we reached the giddy edge of the limestone cliff which forms the highest peak, a few moments after sunrise, having attained an elevation of 5135 feet above the sea.

We were well repaid for the fatigue of the ascent by the magnificent view we obtained from this point. Immediately at our feet, and so directly beneath us that a stone might be dropped perpendicularly upon the trees 2000 feet below, lay charmingly

diversified woods and meadows—curling wreaths of blue smoke ascended from clumps of trees scattered over the park-like scenery, while large herds of cattle seemed from their diminutiveness to have been peppered out upon the rich pasture-land. Snug-looking Tartar villages were dotted over the well-cultivated valleys, and mountain streams meandered through them to the sea, which was scarcely discernible beneath a dense bank of clouds that altogether concealed from our view the southern horizon. Facing us, towards the west, the rival mountain of Babugan Yaila reared its stupendous crags; while far as eye could reach, in a northerly direction, stretched the undulating steppe, narrowing as it reached the Isthmus of Perecop. We could trace the wooded valley of the Salghir, discern the white houses of Simpheropol on its left bank; and nearer still, we saw the beech-woods through which we had ridden in the morning, and the vast table-land of limestone rock over which we had been stumbling. We found a large stone, on which a Russian had inscribed his name; and thinking the spot undeserving of such desecration, we hurled it over a less abrupt part of the precipice, and strained our necks to see it reach the bottom; but we could only hear it crash and echo as it bounded from crag to crag. A magnificent eagle, surprised at so unusual a sound, soared majestically away from an eyrie a few feet down the cliff, and left us in undisputed possession of the summit of the Tchatir Dag.

We soon accomplished the steep descent of the first thousand feet, and, mounting our ponies, attempted to pick our way over the rocks, to some caves, reported to be worth seeing. Our path—or rather where our path would have been, had one existed—lay over a large extent of stratified limestone, of a grey colour. The rugged surface, strewn with huge fragments of the stone, was frequently indented by hemispherical hollows, in which grew clumps of trees, and which, had they not occurred so frequently, might have been mistaken for the craters of extinct volcanoes.

Whatever may have been their origin, they were the cause of incessant annoyance to us as we wound round them—the rocks becoming so sharp and jagged that we were obliged to lead our horses a great part of the way. At last we descended into one, and the guides pointed to a small opening under a rock, into which we were expected to crawl, telling us it was the entrance to the Cave of Foul Kouba. Armed with a tallow candle, I forthwith crept into the hole, scrambling on hands and knees amidst a quantity of human skulls and bones, which rattled dismally as, one after another, we crawled amongst them. For twenty or thirty yards we thus proceeded, occasionally obliged to lie down perfectly flat upon the wet mud and bones, and burrow our way along—a mode of entry which reminded me of an unpleasant experience I once endured in descending into an Egyptian mummy-pit. At last we were enabled to stand upright and look around. A spacious chamber, abotit

forty feet high, seemed supported by some huge stalactites. The largest of these was at least fifty feet in circumference ; and if the cave had been lighted up with such torches as those used at Adelsburg, instead of with three tallow dips, I have no doubt their varied colours would have produced a striking effect. I followed a clear stream through a small opening into what appeared another chamber, but could get no one to accompany me on an exploring expedition, as my companion felt too unwell to enter the cave at all. Montandon, however, says that Monsieur Oudinet, a Frenchman, penetrated half a day's journey into this cave without reaching the end. The innumerable skulls and bones lying strewn about in all directions told a melancholy history ;—a party of Genoese had been smoked to death here, during their wars with the Tartars in the thirteenth century.

We were glad to get into the fresh air again, and, very hot and dirty, started for Kisil Kouba, another cave not far distant. The entrance to this was magnificent, and after descending gradually for about a hundred yards, the cave increased to a breadth of thirty or forty yards, while its height could not have been less than sixty feet. Here, however, the stalactites were comparatively poor, though occasionally well-coloured. It has never been fully explored ; a stream, which we did not reach, becoming too deep to allow of its extent being ascertained.

We alternately rode or led our steeds over miles

more of the same elevated limestone plateau, until our guide proposed taking us a short cut to the main road, which we could discern winding through the wood about fifteen hundred feet below us. We were amazed soon after at his sudden disappearance with two of the horses, and not at all surprised at seeing one of them on the broad of his back, when we looked over the edge of a precipice and saw the rocks down which he was expected to scramble. The Tartar seemed somewhat astonished at his rapid descent, and turned round with the intention of getting back ; but seeing that this was impossible, we shouted to him to try and go on : this, however, he declined, and ultimately decided upon standing stock-still.

It certainly seemed madness to attempt the descent before us ; but as the horses were not very valuable, we got down to the Tartar, and each took possession of his own, leaving him to manage his pony as he liked. It was impossible for the horses to keep their footing amid the loose slabs of rock and rough stones which were strewn along the face of the mountain, and which, slipping from under them, gave them some severe falls. The chief difficulty was to avoid being tumbled upon as we pulled them after us, having found it out of the question to induce them to lead the way : thus, when both horse and man slid together for many yards without being able to gain a footing, the velocity of the former always became the greatest ; and I sometimes found it necessary to let go the reins, scramble as quickly as possible to

one side, and leave my horse to slide past, hoping that something would stop him soon. Becoming gradually more deeply imbedded in a mass of stony debris, he was at last altogether stopped, and so, poor beast, would remain, with every fibre quivering from fear, until I could get slowly down, and, by dint of pulling and beating, start him again on his downward course.

At last, and with no greater damage done than a few cuts and bruises, we reached the filbert woods at the bottom, and I was able again to bestride my uncomfortable Tartar saddle, which in shape was exactly like a feather pillow tied tightly round the middle, the hollow thus formed being a seat in no degree calculated to rest my aching limbs ; so we limped along, weary and jaded, to the hamlet of Taouchan Bazaar, and determined to pass the night in a romantic cottage, buried in the woods, and overhung by the beetling crags of the Tchatir Dag. Here the worthy Tartar occupants gave us some excellent "yourgourt," or sour milk, which, with the addition of sufficient sugar, is very refreshing food. Half-a-dozen boiled eggs and some Tartar cake completed our simple bill of fare.

We found our German friend Richter an invaluable ally, and persuaded him to accompany us on our proposed excursions through the country. When he was not smoking, he was interpreting or making himself generally useful ; and as his personal baggage only consisted of a large cloak, he was unobjectionable on that score ; so he started on a trip, which

was to last for an indefinite period, with perfect complacency, on my lending him a shirt to begin with.

We had taken a padaroshna at Simpheropol for Yalta, and determined to travel *in post telègas*. Accordingly, at daylight on the following morning we were *en route* in one of these primitive conveyances. Precisely similar to the common cart used by the peasants, it was destitute alike of springs, seats, hood, or any sort of protection from the weather; but it was very strongly built, and admirably adapted for fine scenery, when the roughness of the road does not distract the attention. We began to toil up a steep zigzag ascent immediately upon leaving the post-house. The road winds through beech and oak woods, which thickly clothe the mountain sides, and clamber up the crevices in the rocks. Now and then we came upon an opening, from which we obtained an extensive view to the northward, and looked down upon the romantic valley of the Hangar, which we were fast leaving below us—thanks to the vigorous exertions of three sturdy horses, and the energetic shouts of our driver. The summit of the pass is two thousand eight hundred feet above the level of the Black Sea, which here bursts suddenly upon our view. The waves seem to break upon the ruined walls of Alushta, while the vale in which that village is situated stretched away from our feet in luxuriant loveliness.

An obelisk which has been erected near this spot indicates the resting-place of the Emperor Alexander at the period of his last visit to the Crimea in 1824.

We commenced our descent with the utmost rapidity, our trot soon increasing into a gallop; and the cart hopping rather than rolling round the sharp, steep corners, it became quite a work of difficulty to keep our seats. The fantastic Dimirdji, with its huge crags grotesquely piled one above another, towered above us on the left—a worthy *vis-à-vis* to the Tchatir Dag.

In an hour we had reached the bottom, and, like the mountain torrents which had dashed by our side, we glided more tranquilly on, after our stormy passage, between cypress hedges and through long avenues of poplars, casting immeasurable shadows in the morning sun, and past orchards and vineyards laden with luscious fruit. We had hardly regained our breath, when we pulled up at the door of the post-house in Alushta.



Post Telega.



Tartar Village.

CHAPTER XVII.

**TARTAR VILLAGE OF ALUSHTA—A RUSSO-AMERICAN IDIOSYNCRASY—A
CARAVANSERAI—AN EXTORTIONATE POSTMASTER—COAST SCENERY
—MARSANDA—PROSPECT OF AN ADVENTURE—LOVELY SCENERY—
ALUPKA—VINE CULTIVATION.**

THE only remaining vestiges of the ancient dignity of Alushta are three picturesque towers, and a stone wall twelve feet high and seven feet thick, which formed part of a citadel erected by the Emperor Justinian about 465 A.D., to protect the country against the Goths and Huns. These towers seem to rise out of the flat roofs of the Tartar cottages, and produce a most singular effect.

The Alustan Phrurion of the middle ages, this town at one time contained a considerable population, and was the seat of a bishop. Under the Turkish régime it sunk into the condition of a mere Tartar village. This it remains to the present day ; and the massive walls of the old fortress enclose a collection of flimsy cottages, the quaint but barbarous construction of which strikingly contrasts with the solid erections of a civilised nation many centuries ago. The Tartars, unlike other people, generally prefer the steep side of a hill for the site of their villages, rather than those level situations vulgarly known as "eligible building lots." By excavating a space out of the hill, in proportion to the accommodation required, the architect is saved the trouble of building a back wall, while he simply fills up with mud the angles at the sides. The roof which thus, as it were, projects out of the hill, is perfectly flat, and covered with mould. It extends beyond the front walls, and, supported by posts, forms a sort of verandah. Thus, when the traveller passes below one of these cottages, the roof is not visible at all, while, if he be above them, they would have the effect of diminutive drying-grounds for grain or coffee, were it not for the smoke that issues from the conical mud chimneys. These serve not only as apertures for the smoke, but also as means of verbal communication with the interior of the houses. On a dark night an equestrian might easily mistake his way, and, riding straight over one of these roofs, make his appearance at the

front door in a manner too abrupt to be altogether consistent with good breeding.

The cultivation of the vine has progressed more rapidly in the valley of Alushta than in almost any other part of the Crimea. The soil is rich, and watered by two mountain streams, which divide the valley, and give additional effect to the charms of its luxuriant cultivation. Besides the extensive vineyards, a great deal of tobacco is also grown in the neighbourhood. A number of neat Russian houses are springing up on the various properties, and a gay new church, conspicuously placed, has just been completed. We found several travellers at the post-house waiting helplessly for horses. Two gentlemen, direct from Moscow, with padaroshnas of the most urgent description, who had been eating grapes, smoking, and sleeping for twenty-four hours, told us we were not likely to obtain horses until the following day at the earliest. They had bribed the post-master more highly than any of the other unfortunates collected under this miserable roof, and were evidently prepared to outbribe us ; so, instead of entering into a useless competition, we discussed the admirable system from which we were mutually suffering, and which, I readily conceded, was unequalled in its operation by that of any other country.

It is singular that the most striking characteristic of two people so widely dissimilar as the Americans and Russians, should be identical ; that,

while diametrically opposed to one another in their habits and feelings, the same sentiment should predominate in the breasts of both, and find vent in a manner that soon becomes tiresome to the traveller ; and yet, perhaps, although the expressions of an indiscriminating patriotism with which he is overwhelmed in both countries may scarcely differ, it would not be fair to say that the sentiment which gives rise to them is in the two cases exactly the same. It is the *personal* vanity of the American which is touched ; he feels that he has individually shared in the glorious work for which he claims your admiration, and, justly proud of the position of his country and the achievements of his countrymen, he is unable to repress his satisfaction, though at the expense of good breeding : it is the genuine outburst of a mind which lacks not honesty, but refinement. The highly-polished Russian, on the other hand, is disturbed by a restless consciousness of his own innate barbarism, and hopes that, by continually impressing upon you the high state of civilisation of his country and its inhabitants, you may gradually come to doubt the evidence of your own senses, and believe him instead. He is, moreover, insensibly influenced by the mode of government under which he lives ; and, in a blind submission to it, deliberately deceives you with regard to the internal condition of the empire ; for he feels bound to become another of the "solemn shams" which it maintains.

While experimentally testing the truth of this reflec-

tion, the postmaster came in with the news that a German colonist, on his way to Yalta with a cart-load of potatoes, had offered to exchange his load for the two Englishmen. We accordingly proceeded to treat with this individual, and found him phlegmatically smoking in a sort of caravanserai, in company with a number of Armenians and Tartars. It was a large, rambling, Eastern-looking place. At one end, in a partially covered pen-fold, chibouks and coffee were supplied for the multitude. Horses, oxen, and buffaloes were tethered about the yard to the quaintly-constructed carts to which they belonged; and farmers and merchants of many different nations were congregated here, probably on their way home from the fair.

We at last persuaded the German to take us to Yalta, thirty miles distant, for a pound, and were preparing for a start, when the postmaster requested to be paid for the horses we should otherwise have had. This was looked upon as a most reasonable charge by one of our Russian friends, but indignantly demurred to by us. Finding that we were inexorable, this true specimen of a government official threw himself upon our generosity, and hoped, if we would not accede to his lawful demand, we would at any rate bestow upon him a gratuity for having found the German; so that, in fact, we were expected to pay him *one sum* as the price of horses he had refused to give us, and to make him a present of *another sum* because we were able to do with-

out them. If he got a per-centage out of the German into the bargain, he very nearly made a good thing of it. It was a trait so eminently national that I could not help wishing our Russian friends a safe deliverance from the tender mercies of their countryman, as we drove triumphantly out of the yard in our potato-cart, and left them seated in their carriage, with about as much chance of getting away as a man who goes to the House of Commons with a member's order, on the night of an interesting debate, has of ever getting into the stranger's gallery.

Our driver was a prosperous farmer of Rosenthal—a large colony, containing, from his account, about five hundred inhabitants, and cultivating a great extent of country. He was a remarkably uninteresting specimen of the race, and could give us very little information about the village in which he had been born and bred. The road begins to ascend at once from Alushta, and soon attains a considerable altitude. From the summit of the pass, before descending into Bouyouk Lambat, a magnificent view is obtained; and a few chateaux, situated on romantic spots, or in the midst of extensive vineyards, add a softness to the scenery, here very grand. The road is often overshadowed by spreading walnut-trees, and passes through Tartar villages placed on the steep sides of the hill. Near these there is generally a stone fountain, from which gushes cold sparkling water. In some of the carts which we passed, we found the camel substituted by the buffalo—a less

picturesque, but more business-like animal. The road the whole way to Yalta maintains an elevation of about a thousand feet above the sea. The range to the right, two or three miles distant, is from three to four thousand feet high, and very precipitous. The Ayough Dagh, or Mountain of the Bear, is the most conspicuous peak. Rocky promontories stretch far into the sea, and form sheltered bays, in which numerous little sea-ports were formerly situated, deriving their importance from the extensive commerce carried on upon this coast. Parthenik and Oursouf were the most considerable of these, but they now only give names to the chateaux of the noblemen in whose properties they are included.

The vineyards of Magaratsch cover a great extent of the hill-side near Prince Woronzoff's chateau of Marsanda. That enlightened nobleman, wishing to offer every encouragement to the cultivation of the vine, ordered a portion of government land to be divided into a number of allotments, and permitted any person desirous of opening an estate to be put in possession of any of these which he might choose. This he was allowed to occupy for four years, upon giving the requisite security, on the condition that he should bring a certain proportion of his land under grape cultivation. If, at the expiration of this period, he had satisfied all the terms of the conditions upon which he held the lands, they became the property of himself and his heirs for ever.

Shortly after we pass the charmingly situated chateau of Marsanda, the bay of Yalta glistens at our feet, with the white town on its margin, and the thick woods clinging to the steep mountain-side, until they can hold on no longer. Villas become more frequent. We meet a civilised carriage, and two or three princes and counts taking their afternoon ride. We descend the hill at a gallop, and attempt to dash into the town, but only succeed in rumbling into it, and find ourselves none the less welcome at the Hotel d'Odessa because we arrive in a potato-cart.

It is one of the unfortunate peculiarities of the Anglo-Saxon temperament, that the only species of excitement which really seems to suit it, must be attended with some degree of danger or discomfort ; so that it ever affords an Englishman unspeakable gratification to be engaged in some adventure which is likely to result in what he terms "a scrape." Nowhere, indeed, is this propensity more strikingly exhibited than in the conduct of English travellers upon the Continent of Europe, since nowhere can this much-desired end be more easily attained.

Perhaps it was the absence of any such excitement, for some weeks past, in a country offering abundant facility for its enjoyment, that induced us to visit Sevastopol in the way we did. We had determined to explore the most celebrated naval station in Russia, from the moment that we heard that foreign-

ers were not permitted to enter those mysterious precincts except upon rare occasions ; and when we further learned that this permission was granted by the governor alone, and that it would be necessary to renew it every twenty-four hours during our stay, it naturally occurred to us, as Englishmen, that, to act consistently, we ought to pay a visit to so interesting a spot without any such permission at all.

In accordance with this view, we hired at Yalta a common peasant's cart, and a pair of good stout horses—an equipage altogether very similar to the one in which we had performed the journey from Alushta. We hoped that, in so unpretending a vehicle, we should be able to jog into the naval *sanctum* unnoticed. Our German friend engaged to procure *quiet* accommodation for us in the city of dock-yards.

Upon leaving Yalta we ascended the hills again, and, passing through the well-laid-out grounds of Livadia, the seat of Count de Witt, had soon attained an elevation of six hundred feet above the sea, and found ourselves looking down upon Orianda, the delightful residence of the Empress, frowned upon by gigantic rocks, but redeemed from too savage a character by the taste and skill which have brought every available rood of land into a high state of cultivation. The whole way to Alupka, hedges of cypress and olive, pomegranate and laurel, line the road ; handsome chateaux terminate the vistas formed

by long grassy avenues ; and the carefully-kept fences which enclose the pleasure-grounds are evident marks of the frequent residence here of the lords of the soil. Villages are abundantly sprinkled over the rich valleys we traverse, where the hay is quaintly stacked in the pollard trees ; while tempting fruit is piled upon the road-side, and groups of picturesque Tartar maidens are clustered round some sparkling fountain, overshadowed by the spreading arms of a patriarchal walnut. But the enchantment even of such fairy land as this would be incomplete, were it not for the magnificent views which continually burst upon the delighted gaze, when the wildness and grandeur of the distance seem to add an additional charm to the surrounding loveliness.

We descended abruptly to the Castle of Alupka, the residence of Prince Woronzoff, passing through extensive vineyards which belong to this property. The numerous domes and pinnacles which peep out over the trees as we approach, indicate a palace, Oriental in its style and magnitude ; while the glittering cupola and tapering minarets of the elegant mosque, which almost adjoins it, lead us to imagine that the noble owner of all this magnificence is Hadjy-Selim-Ghiri Khan at least. A few moments more, however, and we find, to our perplexity, that we are driving under the lofty walls and frowning battlements of a feudal chieftain's fortress ; and as we pass through the solid gateways into the spacious courtyard, and look up at the massive square tower

and belfry to correspond, we find it difficult to decide whether the building before us bears most resemblance to the stronghold of the Black Douglas, or the palace of the Great Mogul.

Notwithstanding the mixture of such incongruous styles of architecture, the general effect of this splendid chateau is charming. The Prince has spent an almost fabulous amount of silver rubles upon the house and grounds, and has succeeded in rearing an edifice worthy of the scenery amid which it stands. The taste displayed is unexceptionable. Placed almost upon the borders of Europe and Asia, the Eastern character so strongly developed throughout the structure is most appropriate; while the dash of feudalism, as suggestive of the former uncivilised condition of the West, is a graceful allusion to the present state of that country in which it is situated. The façade overlooking the sea is magnificent; terraces and gardens, ornamented with rare plants, extend down the steep slope to the water's edge, while paths are seen winding among broken rocks and between accumulated volcanic masses; and, impending over all, the stupendous crag of the Ai Petri seems to threaten annihilation to the noble edifice which nestles at its base.

It is not long since the Crimea became a fashionable resort among Russian nobility. Prince Woronzoff was the first to set the example, which has been followed by the Emperor and the wealthier

members of the aristocracy. The estates of the latter, lying for the most part between Alushta and Alupka, along the narrow strip of coast which we had followed, are charmingly diversified by the valleys which traverse them ; while they are sheltered from the north winds by the high range of calcareous cliffs, to the existence of which the extraordinary fertility of this part of the peninsula is mainly attributable. It is only recently that any advantage has been taken of this prolific soil. Till within a short period, the few vineyards which existed were situated on the northern slopes of the Tauric chain, and in Soudagh and the neighbouring valleys. Owing to the energetic exertions of Prince Woronzoff, and in spite of the difficulties which always accompany experimental enterprises of this nature, wonderful advances have been made in the cultivation of the vine. Within the last ten years, however, the statistical reports show very little increase in the amount of wine exported from the Crimea. This arises probably from the difficulty of finding a market for wines of an inferior quality, which the Crim wines undoubtedly are, notwithstanding the high-sounding names with which they are dignified. The absence of any roads across the steppe renders it impossible to export wine into the interior to any great extent, although I have occasionally tasted Crim wine in St Petersburg ; while so long as the wines of the Grecian Archipelago are allowed almost free entry into the ports on the Black Sea, competi-

tion in that quarter must be quite hopeless. The present value of wine sold annually amounts to 500,000 rubles, or about twice the revenue derived from the vineyards in the country of the Don Cossacks.



Interior of a Tatar House.



The Pass of Baidar

CHAPTER XVIII.

STUPENDOUS CLIFFS—THE PASS OF BAIDAR—A RUSSIAN'S NOTIONS
OF SCENERY—BAIDAR —TARTARS OF THE COAST, AND TARTARS
OF THE STEPPE—BALACLAVA—ENTER SEVASTOPOL.

We made rapid progress along the excellent new road which now connects Yalta and Sevastopol, to the great convenience of the proprietors through whose estates it passes, and whose handsome equipages we occasionally saw hurrying towards Sevastopol, where the Emperor was hourly expected. Prince Woronzoff had just arrived at Alupka from Tiflis, the present seat of his government, on his way to attend his Imperial Majesty in an inspection of the garrison and fleet. The road gradually attained

an elevation of nearly two thousand feet above the sea, and became every moment more interesting. After leaving the picturesque Tartar villages of Simeis and Kikineis, it winds along the base of cliffs about fifteen hundred feet in height, and as precipitous as those down which we had looked from the summit of the Tchatir Dag. Each turn discovered crags more stupendous than the last, until we reached the rocks of Yamen, where the road has the appearance of a narrow shelf scarped out of sheer limestone. Here we had left behind all traces of that teeming vegetation amid which we had hitherto luxuriated. Wide-spreading pines could no longer attempt to clothe the mountain sides—above were towering peaks; below, huge fragments of rock, which had fallen from the lofty range, lay strewn over the face of the rugged banks of detritus which descend abruptly to the water's edge, and project in rocky promontories far amid the breakers. Where there are occasional sheltered nooks, enterprising Tartars perch their cottages, and live in fancied security, until some tottering crag comes crashing down, and buries whole villages in its impetuous career.

Evidences of such fearful catastrophes are to be seen where the villages of Limaine and Koutchouk-Koi once stood. In the latter instance, where two mills and eight houses were destroyed, signs of an approaching convulsion of nature were perceived by the inhabitants, in the gradual sinking of the ground, which warned them to abandon their dwellings before

the disaster occurred. It is little to be wondered at that the ancients found the northern shore of the Euxine most inhospitable, and that Strabo should describe it as being *τραχεία και ὀρεινή, και καταγιγίζουσα τοῖς βορέοις*.

We had no reason to complain in the latter respect. The weather was lovely ; the jagged edge of the cliffs was traced sharp and clear against the blue sky ; numerous white sails dotted the calm surface of the sea ; and as we whirled along the wild mountain side in our independent conveyance, no care clouded our mental horizon, or breaker ruffled the placid enjoyment with which we revelled in coast scenery, unsurpassed alike by the grandeur of the Cornicè, or the softer beauties of Amalfi.

About eighteen miles from Alupka we passed through a gallery in the rock forty or fifty yards in length ; then turning sharply off from the sea-coast, entered the woods, and commenced the zigzag ascent of the Pass of Baidar, at the summit of which a solid granite gateway has been erected, from whence an extensive view of the whole line of shore is obtained. The Pass of Baidar is quite a recent work. The old road, which could only be traversed on horseback, followed the coast for some distance farther, and crossed the range by the Merdven, or Devil's Staircase, the steps of which were hewn out of the living stone, or supported by trunks of trees. This pathway is compressed between huge masses of impending rock for a distance of eight hundred yards, and

consists of forty zigzags almost parallel, and each only a few steps long. It is the most romantic but laborious way of reaching the Vale of Baidar, which now spread itself before us as we galloped through the forest amid showers of falling leaves. It was quite a relief, after so much that was sublime, to descend again to the picturesque, and see our night quarters snugly situated in a peaceful vale, round which the wooded hills swelled back in gentle slopes, forming a strong contrast to all we had just left.

The greatest difference of opinion exists among travellers as to the merits of the valley of Baidar. Though fully prepared to do justice to its beauty, I was rather disappointed in this far-famed Crimean Tempé. It is natural that the tourist who enters the Crimea at Sevastopol, and whose first experience of Tauric scenery is Baidar, should be enchanted with a luxuriance which a journey across the steppes of Southern Russia has prepared him to appreciate more highly than it deserves. And when, for the first time, he wanders among a Tartar population, sleeps on Tartar divans, drinks Tartar coffee, sees real shepherds and shepherdesses tending their flocks, and then recalls the miseries of some Bessarabian post-hut, it is not to be wondered at if, in a state of unnatural rapture, he should designate this a Tauric Arcadia ; an opinion which would be strongly supported by any Russian to whom he might express it. Apart from those patriotic considerations to which I have already alluded, this is easily accounted for.

Indeed, I may say here that I once found, to my amazement, a Russian depreciate his own country. Wishing to gratify his national vanity, I expressed, in no stronger terms than I really felt, my high appreciation of the grandeur and magnificence of the rocks of Yamen. He could see nothing to admire in them!—they were too bare and rugged; but he was amazed to find I had not visited any chateau on the coast except Alupka. These very ordinary country-houses possessed charms for him which no scenery could command. Did I know that some of them were actually supplied with English stoves? “No!” I had barbarously journeyed on, admiring barren rocks. Desirous of propitiating so artificial a taste, I remarked that great judgment had been displayed in the position and arrangement of the new watering-place of Yalta. “Ah!” said my friend, “but what did you think of the Hotel d’Odessa?” I did not tell him what I thought of the Hotel d’Odessa, and have reserved an account of my experiences in that “model lodging-house” of Russians for another time.

So, when our tourist asks his Russian friend his opinion of Baidar, he answers that it is the most beautiful valley in the Crimea—it grows so many thousand tchetverts of wheat; and, doubtless, looking upon it in that light, it is quite possible the valley of Baidar, in extent and fertility, may be unrivalled in Russia. Upwards of thirty miles in circumference, watered by two limpid streams, prettily

wide eyes, and flat noses to bear witness of an emigration from the deserts of Tartary and Thibet ; but, on the contrary, the regular features and fair complexion that tell of intercourse with the West ; while such words as Tas (cup), Camera (chamber), Mangia (eat), betray with what European people these Asiatics have become so incorporated as to have lost many of the distinguishing marks of their own race.

The Tartars of the northern plains are a pastoral people, leading an active life, whose occupations are somewhat in accordance with the wandering habits of their ancestors. They are simple and hospitable, though of rough exterior. The Tartars of the coast, on the other hand, are extremely indolent, and have no inducement to exertion, finding it unnecessary to do more than gather of the abundance which their fertile soil and genial clime produces. With the Genoese blood that flows in their veins, they are imbued with the cunning of the Italian, while at the same time they are possessed of a certain polish and courtesy of manner which may be looked for in vain in the Russian boor or the savage Nogay. Thus, at Bouyouk Yankoi, where all our wants had been supplied with rough good-nature, our host at first positively refused to accept of any gratuity. At Baidar, on the other hand, we were overwhelmed with attention and civility, and charged for it in a manner that would have done credit to an English hotel-keeper.

Our road, after passing through the woods, and leaving the valley of Baidar, lay through rocky

country covered with scrub, not unlike many glens in the Highlands. The scenery, though it afforded an agreeable variety, did not present any object of striking interest, until we suddenly came upon a large brig riding at anchor in what seemed, at first sight, a picturesque lake. I could hardly believe that this tranquil inlet, surrounded on all sides by steep hills, was part of the same sea that lay spread before us yesterday, which we had quitted so abruptly, and no portion of which was now visible except the pool before us.

The port of Balaclava—a name which, if it is not, ought to be, derived from “bella chiave”—is completely land-locked, and was at one time so great a resort for pirates that it was found necessary to stretch a chain across the mouth of the harbour. Any vessel, however large, having once made its way through the dangerous entrance, may ride out the severest storm in safety upon its unruffled waters, and is effectually concealed from the seaward by the projecting promontory, upon which stands the old Genoese fort, placed so as to command both the port and the entrance.

Where the ancient Greek colony of Klimatum is supposed once to have stood, the modern Greek colony of Balaclava now stands, a charming little place upon the water's edge, protected by the fortress above. It is composed of neat white houses, shaded by poplars, containing a population of Arnauts—a name given to these Greeks by the Tartars, when, as

soldiers of the Russian empire, they took part in the war which resulted in the conquest of the Crimea. In consideration of services then performed, the Empress Catharine the Second allowed them to settle in the old Genoese port of Cimbalo or Balaclava, where they reside to this day, maintaining their old religion, habits, and language, and employed on the revenue service—an occupation for which their former piratical habits have rendered them peculiarly adapted. They enjoy many privileges, and are not liable to be called out for active service, except during four months in the year. Many of them are merchants and shopkeepers in other towns of the Crimea. Balaclava itself is totally devoid of any mercantile importance ; and this is probably owing in a great measure to the destructive ravages of the worm with which its waters are infested, and by which the hulls of ships remaining there for any length of time become perforated.

As we approached Sevastopol, the great curiosity which I had long felt to visit a place of which Russians speak with a kind of mysterious awe, was not unmingled with anxiety ; and when, at a sudden turn of the road, we obtained an extensive view of the western shores of the Crimea, it was startling to find that the most prominent feature in the landscape was Sevastopol itself, with its lofty white houses, and frowning batteries, and green-domed churches. Far inland, and long after the houses had ceased, the tapering masts of the ships were visible above the

low hills ; their sails, which had been hung out to dry, were hanging idly upon them ; and as we approached still nearer, we could discern the large hulls of the line-of-battle ships floating, as it were, in the very streets of the town. My expectations of Sevastopol were evidently not doomed to disappointment, whatever might be my hopes of entry. There did not seem much to fear on that score. Our clothes had been reduced, by a succession of long steppe journeys, to a worse condition than those of Richter and the driver. A thick coating of grey dust rendered all minor differences of costume imperceptible ; and as we leant back, half hidden amongst bundles of hay, with our hats slouched over our eyes, as if to keep the sun off, we flattered ourselves that we looked extremely like phlegmatic German peasants from some neighbouring colony. Our accomplice smoked imperturbably and incessantly ; his friend occupied himself with his horses ; and so, utterly regardless of the vigilant sentinels, we passed carelessly into the town, and half an hour afterwards were eating beefsteaks at the house of a worthy German, who was delighted to receive us, having borne with the utmost firmness the scrutinising eyes of whole regiments of conscientious soldiers.



Inkerman

CHAPTER XIX.

THE HARBOUR OF SEVASTOPOL—THE RUSSIAN FLEET—NAVY CONTRACTS
—THE EMPEROR'S VISIT—THE NAVAL REVIEW—FORTIFICATIONS OF
SEVASTOPOL—SPECULATIONS IN THE COMMISSARIAT—THE RUSSIAN
ARMY—SUMMARY PUNISHMENT—CORRUPTION IN HIGH PLACES—
INKERMAN—THE TOWN OF CAVERNS—THE VALE OF BALBECK—CAMEL
HERDS—ARRIVAL AT BAGTCHÈ SERAI—SUPPERLESS TO BED.

THE reserved manner which, as unlawful visitors, it became us to assume at Sevastopol, was only in keeping with the air of mystery and distrust which pervades everything there. The suspicious eye of each officer I passed chilled the blood in my veins, long accustomed to a free circulation on the boundless steppes or wild mountain-side. I had not taken

ten paces down the main street, when my guilty conscience was startled, and the last particle of romance frightened out of me, by a sentry at my side suddenly presenting arms to the governor, who was accidentally passing. Here no harmless ruined old tower, perched upon the dizzy cliff, carried me back in imagination to the days of Italian greatness. No veiled women and sedate camels transported my roving fancy to the voluptuous East. The only variation in the view was from the mouth of a thirty-six-pound gun into that of a sixty-four. I was ever oppressed with the painful consciousness of looking like an Englishman, and suspected the groups of soldiers standing at the corners of the streets of plotting our apprehension. We were walking in a magazine which might explode at any moment, both literally and figuratively.

The population of Sevastopol, including military and marine, amounts to forty thousand. The town is in fact an immense garrison, and looks imposing because so many of the buildings are barracks or government offices. Still I was much struck with the substantial appearance of many of the private houses ; and, indeed, the main street was handsomer than any I had seen since leaving Moscow, while it owed its extreme cleanliness to large gangs of military prisoners, who were employed in perpetually sweeping. New houses were springing up in every direction, government works were still going forward vigorously, and Sevastopol bids fair to rank high

among Russian cities. The magnificent arm of the sea upon which it is situate, is an object worthy the millions which have been lavished in rendering it a fitting receptacle for the Russian navy.

As I stood upon the handsome stairs that lead down to the water's edge, I counted thirteen sail of the line anchored in the principal harbour. The newest of these, a noble three-decker, was lying within pistol-shot of the quay. The average breadth of this inlet is one thousand yards ; two creeks branch off from it, intersecting the town in a southerly direction, and containing steamers and smaller craft, besides a long row of hulks which have been converted into magazines or prison-ships.

The hard service which has reduced so many of the handsomest ships of the Russian navy to this condition, consists in lying for eight or ten years upon the sleeping bosom of the harbour. After the expiration of that period, their timbers, composed of fir or pine-wood never properly seasoned, become perfectly rotten. This result is chiefly owing to inherent decay, and in some degree to the ravages of a worm that abounds in the muddy waters of the Tchernoï Retcka, a stream which, traversing the valley of Inkerman, falls into the upper part of the main harbour. It is said that this pernicious insect—which is equally destructive in salt water as in fresh—costs the Russian government many thousands, and is one of the most serious obstacles to the formation of an efficient navy on the Black Sea.

It is difficult to see, however, why this should be the case, if the ships are copper-bottomed ; and a more intimate acquaintance with the real state of matters would lead one to suspect that the attacks of the naval *employés* are more formidable to the coffers of the government than the attacks of this worm, which is used as a convenient scape-goat, when the present rotten state of the Black Sea fleet cannot otherwise be accounted for. In contradiction to this, we may be referred to the infinitely more efficient condition of the Baltic fleet ; but that may arise rather from their proximity to headquarters than from the absence of the worm in the northern seas.

The wages of the seamen are so low—about sixteen rubles a-year—that it is not unnatural they should desire to increase so miserable a pittance by any means in their power. The consequence is, that from the members of the naval board to the boys that blow the smiths' bellows in the dockyard, everybody shares the spoils obtained by an elaborately devised system of plunder carried on somewhat in this way :—A certain quantity of well-seasoned oak being required, government issues tenders for the supply of the requisite amount. A number of contractors submit their tenders to a board appointed for the purpose of receiving them, who are regulated in their choice of a contractor, not by the amount of his tender, but of his bribe. The fortunate individual selected immediately sub-contracts upon a somewhat similar principle. Arranging to be sup-

plied with the timber for half the amount of his tender, the sub-contractor carries on the game, and perhaps the eighth link in this contracting chain is the man who, for an absurdly low figure, undertakes to produce the seasoned wood.

His agents in the central provinces, accordingly, float a quantity of green pines and firs down the Dnieper and Bog to Nicholaeff, which are duly handed up to the head contractor, each man pocketing the difference between his contract and that of his neighbour. When the wood is produced before the board appointed to inspect it, another bribe seasons it, and the government, after paying the price of well-seasoned oak, is surprised that the 120 gunship, of which it has been built, is unfit for service in five years.

The rich harvest that is reaped by those employed in building and fitting her up is as easily obtained ; and to such an extent did the dockyard workmen trade in government stores, &c., that merchant vessels were for a long time prohibited from entering the harbour. I was not surprised, after obtaining this interesting description of Russian ingenuity, to learn that, out of the imposing array before us, there were only two ships in a condition to undertake a voyage round the Cape.

If, therefore, in estimating the strength of the Russian navy, we deduct the ships which, for all practical purposes, are unseaworthy, it will appear that the Black Sea fleet, that standing bugbear of the

unfortunate Porte, will dwindle into a force more in proportion to its limited sphere of action, and to the enemy which, in the absence of any other European power, it would encounter. There is no reason to suppose that the navy forms an exception to the rule, that all the great national institutions of Russia are artificial. The Emperor and the army are not to be regarded in that light, though the latter will doubtless be glad of an early opportunity of redeeming its character, which has been somewhat shaken by the unsatisfactory displays of prowess daily exhibited in the Caucasus, and the absurd misadventures of one of the divisions, which ultimately failed in taking part in the last Hungarian campaign, for lack of a properly organised commissariat.

The greatest excitement prevailed during our stay at Sevastopol: crowds of people had been attracted from all parts of the south of Russia to receive the Emperor; the garrison had been whitewashing their barracks, and drilling themselves with praiseworthy perseverance; while the whole dockyard force had been engaged for months past in getting the ships into the presentable condition they now exhibited.

It seems that a very small complement of men is kept on board each ship while in harbour, the majority of the crews being employed on shore,—a system which is not very well calculated to keep the men in training.

As a cruise under the Emperor's personal inspection was anticipated, a great deal of exercising was

necessary, to rub off the dockyard dust, for which his Imperial Majesty possesses a particularly keen eye. It is hardly natural, however, to expect that men whose maritime experience has perhaps never extended beyond the Bosphorus, should be as good sailors as those who have gone round the Horn once for every year of their lives. The seamen reared in such a nursery as our mercantile marine affords, must ever be a very different stamp of men from those reared in the dockyard of Sevastopol. It is maliciously said, that upon the few occasions that the Russian fleet in the Black Sea have encountered a gale of wind, the greater part of the officers and men were always sea-sick.

It is certain that they have sometimes been unable to tell whereabouts they were on their extensive cruising-ground; and once between Sevastopol and Odessa, it is currently and libellously reported that the admiral was so utterly at a loss, that the flag-lieutenant, observing a village on shore, proposed to land and ask the way.

I regretted not being able to stay in Sevastopol to witness the naval review, which the presence of the Emperor himself would have rendered additionally interesting. As, however, our chance of detection would have been considerably increased by the prominent exposure which this exhibition must have entailed, we thought it prudent to beat a timely retreat, and, to Richter's great disappointment, escaped from Sevastopol the day before the great

event was to take place, thus obliging him to picture in imagination the manifestations of loyalty with which his Imperial Majesty would be welcomed. The Emperor, as we afterwards heard, did not accompany the fleet on their short cruise outside the port, but expressed himself very much dissatisfied with their performances.

Nothing can be more formidable than the appearance of Sevastopol from the seaward. Upon a future occasion we visited it in a steamer, and found that at one point we were commanded by twelve hundred pieces of artillery : fortunately for a hostile fleet, we afterwards heard that these could not be discharged without bringing down the rotten batteries upon which they are placed, and which are so badly constructed that they look as if they had been done by contract. Four of the forts consist of three tiers of batteries. We were, of course, unable to do more than take a very general survey of these celebrated fortifications, and therefore cannot vouch for the truth of the assertion, that the rooms in which the guns are worked are so narrow and ill-ventilated, that the artillerymen would be inevitably stifled in the attempt to discharge their guns and their duty ; but of one fact there was no doubt, that however well fortified may be the approaches to Sevastopol by sea, there is nothing whatever to prevent any number of troops landing a few miles to the south of the town, in one of the six convenient bays with which the coast, as far as Cape Kherson, is in-

dented, and marching down the main street (provided they were strong enough to defeat any military force that might be opposed to them in the open field), sack the town, and burn the fleet.

Notwithstanding the large numerical force which occupies the south of Russia, the greatest difficulty must attend the concentration of the army upon any one point, until railroads intersect the empire, and its water communication is improved. At present, except during four months in the year, the climate alone offers obstacles almost insurmountable to the movements of large bodies of men ; the roads are impassable for pedestrians in spring and autumn, and in winter the severity of the weather precludes the possibility of troops crossing the dreary steppes. But in addition to the natural impediments presented by the configuration of the country, the absence of roads, and the rigour of the climate, all military operations are crippled by that same system of wholesale corruption so successfully carried on in the naval department.

Indeed, it would be most unfair if one service monopolised all the profits arising from this source. The accounts I received of the war in the Caucasus, from those who had been present, exceeded anything of the sort I could have conceived possible. The frightful mortality among the troops employed there amounts to nearly twenty thousand annually. Of these, far the greater part fall victims to disease and starvation, attributable to the rapacity of their com-

manding officers, who trade in the commissariat so extensively that they speedily acquire large fortunes. As they are subject to no control in their dealings with contractors for supplying their requirements, there is nothing to check the ardour of speculation ; and the profits enjoyed by the colonel of a regiment are calculated at £3000 or £4000 a-year, besides his pay. It is scarcely possible to apprehend at a glance the full effect of a process so paralysing to the thews and sinews of war ; or at once to realise the fact, that the Russian army, numerically so far superior to that of any European power, and supplied from sources which appear inexhaustible, is really in a most inefficient condition, and scarcely worthy of that exaggerated estimate which the British public seem to have formed of its capabilities. It is not upon the plains of Krasna Selo or Vosnesensk, amid the dazzling glitter of a grand field-day in the Emperor's presence, that any correct notion can be formed of the Russian army. The imperial plaything assumes a very different appearance in the remote Cossack guard-house, where I have scarcely been able to recognise the soldier in the tattered and miserably equipped being before me, or on a harassing march, or in the presence of an indomitable enemy.

We have only to remember that the present position of Russia in the Caucasus has remained unaltered for the last twenty-two years, notwithstanding the vast resources which have been brought to bear upon this interminable war, to perceive that the bril-

liant appearance of the Russian soldier on parade affords no criterion of his efficiency in the field of battle ; while no more convincing proof could be desired of the gross corruption and mismanagement which characterises the proceedings of this campaign, than the fact of an overwhelming force of two hundred thousand men being held in check for so long a period by the small but gallant band who are fighting for their snow-clad mountains and their liberty.

A striking view is obtained from the ridge of the hill upon which the governor's house is situated. Upon one side the streets run parallel down to the water's edge ; upon the other they descend into the old town, once known by the name of Achtiar. There is nothing to interest in this collection of dirty lanes inhabited by the filthy and disreputable population for which a large military or naval station always serves as a nucleus.

When we returned to Sevastopol not long afterwards, we heard that the Emperor had left the military portion of the community a reminiscence that was calculated to produce a deep impression. He had scarcely terminated his flying visit, and the smoke of the steamer by which he returned to Odessa still hung upon the horizon, when, in a smothered whisper, one soldier confided to another that their ranks had received an addition ; and when we returned to Sevastopol it was said that the late governor, in a significant white costume, was employed with the rest of the gang upon the streets he

had a fortnight before rolled proudly through, with all the pomp and circumstance befitting his high position. No dilatory trial had reduced him to the condition in which he now appeared before the inhabitants of his late government. The fiat had gone forth, and the general commanding became the convict sweeping. I was very anxious to discover what crime had been deemed worthy of so severe a punishment, but upon no two occasions was the same reason assigned, so it was very clear that nobody knew ; and probably no one found it more difficult than the sufferer himself to single out the particular misdemeanour for which he was disgraced. The general opinion seemed to be that the unfortunate man had been lulled into security in his remote province, and, fancying himself unnoticed in this distant corner of the empire, had neglected to practise that customary caution, in the appropriation of his bribes and other perquisites, which is the first qualification of a man in an elevated position in Russia, and without which he can never look for promotion in the army, or make a successful governor. At the same time, the expenses attendant upon this latter position are generally so very heavy that it does not answer to be too timid or fastidious.

I think it is De Custine who says that no half-measures in plundering will do here. If a man has not, during the time of his holding an appointment, sufficiently enriched himself to be able to bribe the judges who try him for his dishonest practices, he

will certainly end his days in Siberia ; so that, if the fraud has not been extensive, the margin left will barely remunerate him for his trouble and anxiety. The probability is, that General —— had calculated upon the usual court of inquiry, and was consequently quite unprepared for the decided measures of his imperial master.

Reseating ourselves on our bundles of hay, we jolted away from Sevastopol, passing the celebrated docks, which have been constructed at an enormous expense under the able superintendence of Colonel Upton, and soon after descended into the lovely valley of Inkerman, from which they are supplied by a canal twelve miles long. The tunnel at Inkerman, through which it is carried, is about three hundred yards in length. The hills that enclose this valley supply the freestone of which the town and docks of Sevastopol have been built, the quarries being so situated as to command water-carriage for the entire distance. But the curiosities of Inkerman—the “ Town of Caverns ”—are to be found rather in the remains which still exist there, to tell of races long since departed, than in those constructions which display the perseverance and ingenuity of modern times.

The precipitous cliffs, between which flows the Tchernoi Retcka, are positively honeycombed with cells and chapels. The origin of these singular caves is uncertain ; but they are supposed to have been excavated by monks during the reigns of the Emperors in the middle or later ages. When the Arians who

inhabited the Chersonesus were persecuted by the Greek Church, then predominant, the members of that sect took refuge in these singular dwellings, whose lofty and inaccessible position rendered them to a certain degree secure.

The largest chapel, which presents all the characteristics of Byzantine architecture, is about twenty-four feet long by twelve broad. Sarcophagi, usually quite empty, have been found in many of the cells : these latter are often connected with each other, and are approached by stairs cut in the living rock.

Perched upon the same cliff, and of much earlier date than the caverns which undermine them, are the ruined walls of an old fort. Whether they are the remains of the Ctenus of the ancients, built by Diophantes, Mithridates' general, to strengthen the Heracleian Wall, or of the Theodori of the Greeks, or of some Genoese stronghold, is still a very open question.

There can be no doubt that the seat of government of the principality of Theodori stood formerly on this spot, though I think that Mrs Guthrie is mistaken in imagining that it was composed of Circassians. The site of the Circassian colony was Tcherkess Kermen, the town of the Circassians, the remains of which are situated to the eastward of Inkerman, so that they are not, as she thinks, identical ; and if, as she supposes, the fortresses of Theodori (Inkerman) and Gothie (Mangoup) maintained their independence until the sixteenth century, the

Genoese could never have possessed them, as they had been expelled by the Ottoman power from the Crimea before that period ; but there are undoubted evidences of their occupation of Mangoup ; and it is more probable that the population of these two fortresses consisted of Greeks, who were to some extent dependent upon the famous Greek colony of Soudagh, or Soldaya ; and when the Genoese, in the fourteenth century, possessed themselves of this mercantile emporium, it is not likely that two petty principalities should be able to resist the Italian adventurers, then in the zenith of their power.

The view from the high-road to Bagtchè Serai of the valley of Inkerman, with its perforated cliffs and ruined fortress, is as remarkable as it is beautiful. A romantic old bridge in the foreground spans the sluggish stream, which winds amidst the most luxuriant vegetation.

The plains of Baidar did not seem to me comparable either to this valley or to the vale of Balbeck, into which we shortly after descended, and the richness of which exceeded anything we had yet seen. The road follows the course of the Balbeck for some miles, overshadowed by wide-spreading trees, and passing through gardens, the productions of which it would be equally tiresome and hopeless to attempt to enumerate.

We met great numbers of waggons, all filled with loyal subjects, hurrying to Sevastopol ; many of them were friends of Richter's. They seemed so amazed

at the company he was in, and the direction he was going, that they forgot to return his salutation. We had scarcely passed his friends before we met some of our own. A long string of horse *telègas*, driven by Russian mujiks in beards and sheepskins, appeared slowly traversing the valley ; and when we found that they were laden with merchandise from the Fair of Nijni, we regarded those familiar figures as old acquaintances, whom, under the circumstances, it was advisable not to acknowledge. They return laden chiefly with dried fruit and Crim wine.

At the large and picturesque village of Davonkoi we left the valley, and shortly afterwards passed the mansion of a Tartar nobleman, celebrated for his great wealth. His riches seemed patriarchal in their character, for an enormous herd of camels, scattered over the face of the country, were being collected into groups by the herdsmen, who were driving them home for the night. It was an interesting sight, in the still evening, to watch these ungainly creatures stalking over the extensive grass prairies, mingled with flocks of sheep, distinguished from those of any other country by their short curly wool, of a bluish grey colour. The breed which produces this wool is very highly prized in the Crimea, in certain portions of which alone it is reared. Great quantities of the lamb skins, called "shumski," are exported annually into Poland and the neighbouring countries. They are valued on the spot at from ten to fifteen shillings a-piece.

It was so dark when we entered the narrow valley in which the old Tartar capital of Bagtchè Serai is situated, that we had great difficulty in finding the dilapidated archway, through which it was necessary to pass into the main street ; then we rumbled over its uneven pavement, between low deserted-looking tenements, for an interminable time. At length Richter and the driver, who had been looking in vain for a gleam of light, which is the only evidence, in a Tartar town, of a house of public entertainment, descended to explore, and left us stationary in the narrow silent street. Here we waited, until my imagination, wearied with the excitement of the day, peopled the sleeping city with the veiled ghosts of Tartar women, whom I thought I could perceive haunting the black alleys, which opened up to the right and left of our position, in company with sundry monks whose bones lay whitening in the caverns of Inkerman.

A sudden jolt aroused me to a sense of the impropriety of which my fancy had been guilty, and I found that our spies had returned, cheered by a ray of hope so feeble that no doubt it corresponded with the ray of light which had given rise to it. However, upon entering the courtyard, we found ourselves in an indisputable khan. It was filled with every conceivable description of vehicle, while a number of small doors opened upon a low wooden balcony which extended all round it, and beneath which a quantity of horses were stalled. The rooms were in proportion

to the size of the doors, and we obtained the most sumptuously furnished apartment, in which there was barely space for three greasy stretchers.

As we had not tasted anything since leaving Sevastopol, and found that the khan did not supply food, we made an expedition into the town, in a vague but desperate hope of finding something to eat somewhere. All our efforts, however, to knock up bakers and butchers were unsuccessful ; we only received abusive answers from behind unopened shutters, and so were obliged to return to our khan, and make a supper off thick coffee, and bread more black and sour than usual. After some consolatory chibouks we stretched ourselves upon the wooden frames, and were lulled to sleep by the low monotonous tones of an old moullah, in the adjoining coffee-room, who, to judge by the imperturbable countenances of his smoking auditory, was relating a history calculated before long to produce a similar effect upon them.



Palace of the Khans

CHAPTER XX.

BAGTCHÈ SERAI—SHOPS—A TARTAR EATING-HOUSE—AN IMPROMPTU MEAL—BOOZA CELLARS—KARAÏTE JEWESSES—THE PALACE OF THE KHANS—INTERIOR OF THE PALACE—COSTLY DECORATIONS—FOUNTAIN OF SELSABIL—MAUSOLEUM OF THE KHANS.

THE change from Sevastopol, the city of barracks and dockyards, to Bagtchè Serai, “the Seraglio of Gardens,” was as agreeable as it was sudden. Here, in a sequestered dell, shut out from the world by the fantastic crags which surround it, the ancient capital of Crim Tartary lies embowered amid the most luxuriant vegetation ; overtopping which, a forest of tapering minarets and waving poplars extends far up the narrow valley, forming the only signs which lead

us to suspect the existence of dwellings concealed beneath.

The population is precisely the same as it ever was ; there is no visible evidence of the great change which has passed over the condition of the Tartar—nothing significant of the power to which he now owes his allegiance. The Crescent and the Cross do not here compete with one another ; venerable mosques are not jostled by green domes bespattered with stars ; nor is the cry of the muezzin drowned in the clang of unmusical bells ; no reckless drosky threatens the foot-passenger with instant destruction ; no reeling mujik overwhelms him with besotted caresses ; no importunate shopkeeper bawls loudly after him. Were it not for the Cossack who stands sentinel in the archway of the Palace of the Khans, those deserted halls might yet be filled with the turbaned retinue of former years, and the empty harem still occupied by dark-eyed houris.

It was pleasant to emerge from the savage rudeness of Northern barbarism into even a low state of Eastern civilisation ; but how difficult to realise the fact, that the dignified Tartar who saluted us with “Sabani khair,” was a fellow-subject of the pigmy Laplander ; and that not thirty miles distant their common ruler, surrounded by his Muscovite subjects, seemed to be ignoring the existence of this town, the former capital of a kingdom whose princes had once made his ancestors tremble. A word to the forces he was now inspecting might change the des-

tinies of Europe ; but the inhabitants of Bagtchè Serai were as proudly indifferent to their Emperor as he was to them, and cared nothing whatever for the destinies of Europe. -

The main street, so silent upon the previous evening, was now full of life and activity. It is nearly a mile long, and so narrow that two carts can scarcely pass. Fortunately this is a contingency which does not often arise ; and the busy throng that traverses the street, which consists almost entirely of Tartars, Karaïte Jews, and Gypsies, is extremely inconvenienced by the appearance of a wheeled vehicle at all.

As we mixed with this nondescript populace, our attention was divided between the variety of feature and costume which it exhibited, and the wonderful display of goods exposed for sale in the open shops. These are devoid of any front wall, and are closed at night by the wooden shutters which in the daytime form a sort of counter. Upon this the owner sits cross-legged, earnestly engaged in the manufacture of the article he sells, and only allowing himself to be distracted from his occupation by the arrival of a customer.

From the manner in which these shops were arranged, I concluded that the members of each craft were collected into divisions specially appropriated to them. Thus, immediately on leaving our khan, and turning up the principal street towards the Palace, we passed a bazaar in which sheepskin

caps were fabricated. Here the purchaser, if he find none ready made to suit his taste, has simply to choose his skin and strike his bargain, and is furnished with the genuine article before an hour has elapsed. The most characteristic are those made of the shumski or lamb-skin, with the short curling wool, of a bluish-grey colour, which I have already mentioned. Beyond these come the workers in leather, encompassed by piles of saddles, richly embroidered belts, tobacco-pouches, and absurd-looking whips, with a large flat piece of leather at the end of the lash, and a knife concealed in the handle. Opposite are slipper-makers and tailors; while the cutlers occupy a great extent of territory, and are famed for the excellent Tartar knives which they manufacture.



It adds immensely to the interest of shopping to witness the process of manufacturing the article one wishes to buy, and I have no doubt it proves a most profitable plan thus to expose the interior economy of a craft. It was impossible to watch a man make a cap, and not buy it after it was done.

We were so long moving about from one set of these affable shopkeepers to another, that it was late in the day before I began to wonder whether we were never coming to, a food quarter. Hitherto,

since leaving Sevastopol, we had feasted our eyes only, while Richter had subsisted entirely on pipes. Upon his now suggesting that we should go to a cook-shop, we willingly proceeded in search of one, and were attracted, by sundry whiffs redolent of mutton, to a large corner house, whence arose a cloud of fragrant steam. Here a number of people were standing in the open street, diving into huge projecting cauldrons of soup, from whence they extracted square pieces of fat, which they devoured with great relish while strolling about among the crowd. Not entirely approving of this *al fresco* mode of dining, and fearing that we might stand a chance of being run over while discussing an interesting morsel, we were glad to discover that it was not necessary to present a ticket of admission to a Bagtchè Serai soup-kitchen ; so we entered, and seated ourselves on a narrow bench, behind a very filthy plank intended to serve as a festive board. Being fully exposed to the street, we were in a most convenient position for the loungers in it to satisfy their curiosity regarding us, and accordingly we were mutually edified by staring at one another.

Our attention, however, was soon diverted to the head cook, who brought us a boiled sheep's head in one hand, while with the other he attempted to catch the gravy that trickled through his fingers upon a loaf of black bread. These he set down before us on the cleanest part of the plank we could

nary concoction with which we were supplied at the "Booza" cellar, whither we resorted. Here hogs-heads of this liquor, which is extracted from fermented millet-seed, and highly esteemed among the Tartars, were ranged around a low room, and served to us in earthenware jugs. Its excessive astringency rendered it anything but an agreeable beverage.

We had now traversed the entire length of the main street, and reached a small square, the right side of which was occupied by the far-famed Palace of the Khans. My attention was, however, more immediately directed to a number of women who were collected here, and who displayed at once the varieties of race most commonly observed in Bagtchè Serai. It must be a great comfort to Tartar ladies that their religion obliges them to remain veiled in public, for I have little doubt that they would be fairly eclipsed by the lovely Jewesses, whose graceful costume in the group before us contrasted favourably with that of their waddling companions. There is nothing Israelitish about these Karaïte maidens—the Grecian nose and fiery nostril, the short proud upper lip, and exquisitely turned mouth, seem almost to belie their Hebrew origin ; while those large eyes, so deeply set, require no white fereedjè to give additional effect to their lustre.

They are congregated under an old archway, and laughingly criticising the strangers, an occupation which would not meet with the approval of their lord and master, who, in common with the rest of

his sect, shares the prejudices of true believers in jealously guarding the female part of his establishment. Near them some gypsies in wild array, with dishevelled hair, prowl restlessly about, having left their caves in the rocks to follow their universally recognised occupation of begging and stealing.

It seemed to me that the only Russians in Bagtchè Serai were the soldiers in charge of the Palace. I afterwards heard that, by an imperial ukase, Russians were forbidden to settle in the valley ; a most unusual instance of generosity and consideration on the part of the government.

We half regretted, after seeing the officer in command, that we had not taken up our abode in the rooms furnished for the accommodation of strangers in the Palace ; but we scarcely thought it worth while now to desert our present characteristic abode, even for the apartments of royalty, and so contented ourselves with inspecting the former habitation of the Khans, under the guidance of a garrulous old soldier.

Crossing the moat, we passed through a massive painted gateway with projecting eaves, and I was no less astonished than delighted with the singular collection of buildings that met my eye on every side. To the right of a large grass-grown court stands the rambling disjointed palace, with gaudy walls and highly decorated trellis-work festooned with vines, and small lattice windows looking out upon fragrant gardens ; while above all is an octagonal wooden tower, with a Chinese-looking roof. On the left are a number of

two-storeyed buildings, with verandahs supported by ornamented posts, and near them a mausoleum and mosque, with two tall minarets—the mark of royalty. A handsome fountain, shaded by willows, stands opposite the private entrance; behind it, the court is enclosed by the walls of an orchard, situated on a rising ground, which is intersected by terraces. Looking beyond the objects immediately surrounding us, the view was no less striking. We seemed to be in the arena of an amphitheatre, of which the flat roofs of the Tartar houses—stuck, as it were, in rows against the sides of the mountains—represented the seats. All over these mountains caves occurred frequently, resembling pigeon-holes. Nothing can be more unique than the aspect of the town from the courtyard of the palace, while gigantic rocks, of grotesque shape, are poised in mid air, threatening destruction to all that remains of the capital of this once mighty empire.

The iron gate at the entry of the palace bears this inscription :—

“ The Master of this gate, who has acquired this province, is the most exalted personage, Hadji Ghiri Khan, son of Mingli Ghiri Khan. May the Lord God deign to accord supreme happiness to Mingli Ghiri Khan, as well as to his father and mother.”

Entering the principal vestibule, we observed the celebrated Fountain of Tears, immortalised among Russians by the poem of Nicholas Pushkin. This

hall opens, by means of arches, to the gardens of the Seraglio ; and from it, dark staircases ascend and terminate in narrow passages, which again lead to spacious galleries, brilliantly decorated.

Wandering through the latter, we lose ourselves at last in a labyrinth of small apartments, scarcely differing from one another, connected by doorways, in which swing heavy satin brocades. We glide noiselessly through them over the soft Turkish carpets, as if treading the chamber of death. There was something appropriate in the mysterious silence which characterised all our movements, surrounded as we were by a luxury so fresh-looking and real, that it seemed as though its possessors had but just vanished for ever from the fairy scenes they had conjured around them. Here were broad crimson divans, richly embroidered curtains carefully suspended over the latticed windows, and tapestry of costly satin elaborately worked, concealing the walls, or hanging quaintly from semicircular projections over the fireplaces—a flimsy splendour, which was not allowed to fade and vanish with its original possessors, but was retained in all its gaudy colouring, as if to mock the memory of those to whose effeminate tastes it once had ministered.

But Muscovite sovereigns have condescended to lodge in the former abode of the Khans ; and the guide, of course, imagines that the most interesting object in the palace is the bed in which the Empress Catharine slept. We hurried him on to the room of

Maria Potoski, fraught with more romantic associations. Here for ten years the infatuated countess resided, hoping to effect a compromise between her conscience and her passion for the Khan, by a life devoted to religious exercises, while content to reign, at the same time, supreme in the palace of the infidel. The apartments appropriated to her are luxuriously arranged ; and a lofty hall, with fountains plashing upon slabs of marble, bears her name. Adjoining it is a Roman Catholic chapel, which was built expressly for her use by the amorous Khan.

They must have been somewhat lax Mahomedans altogether these Khans. Many of the rooms are ornamented with representations of birds and beasts and creeping things, in every variation of grotesque form ; while, as if to compensate for this direct violation of the Koran, fragments of that sacred record are inscribed upon the walls. One of the most singular chambers in this most singular palace is a large glass summer-house, surrounded by a divan, and decorated in a most unorthodox manner, in which a fountain plays into a porphyry basin. It opens upon a flower-garden, at the farther end of which, shaded by a magnificent old vine, is a marble bath, prepared for the Empress Catharine by the considerate gallantry of Potemkin, and supplied by cascades from the fountain of Selsabil. The favourite lived enclosed among delicious gardens, in the now deserted harem, during the residence of his royal mistress in the palace, from which it is approached by a succession of

rooms, and the trees to blossom and perfume the deserted gardens, we entered the vaulted chambers in which the most illustrious Khans repose. Here a venerable old Hadjè held tremulously aloft the dim flickering light, to enable us to look over the turbaned tombstones. Passing out, we walked through the cemetery, where vines cluster over the crumbling ruins that tell of departed greatness ; and all seemed travelling the same road which the occupants of these sculptured sepulchres have already taken.



Mausoleum of the Khans.



The Jewish Fortress of Tchoufut Kalé.

CHAPTER XXI.

ANNEXATION OF THE CRIMEA — INTRIGUING POLICY OF RUSSIA —
 MURDER OF DEVLIT GHIRI KHAN — NOVEL MODE OF CATERING
 — SCENES IN THE KHAN — A TARTAR BATH — VALLEY OF JEHOSSA-
 PHAT — TCHOUFUT KALÈ — THE SYNAGOGUE — KARAÏTE JEWS :
 THEIR PECULIAR TENETS — THE JEWISH FORTRESS — THE MONAS-
 TERY OF USPENSKOÏ — THE SERAGLIO OF GARDENS.

THE Seraglio of Gardens possesses other charms than those with which it is invested by virtue of its romantic position, its Tartar population, and Oriental palace.

The historical associations connected with the former capital of Little Tartary are not devoid of interest. From the period of the total annihilation of the Bosphorian empire in the fourth century, until the occupation of the Crimea by the advanced guard of the

Golden Horde in the thirteenth, the history of this country presents little else than a series of invasions by those barbarians, who, on their way to occupy the fertile plains of eastern Europe, had made the Tauric peninsula their first resting-place, and established in it a supremacy which only existed until some new host swept along this great highway with irresistible violence, overturned the institutions, and succeeded to the territories of their savage precursors. Thus the kingdom of Bosphorus had no sooner fallen a prey to the incessant ravages of the Alans, the Goths, and the Huns, than they were succeeded by the Khazars, the Pétchenègues, and the Comanes, who each in turn occupied the Crimea, until the grandson of Zingis Khan succeeded in establishing a more durable empire amid the remains of which we were now wandering; and it was melancholy to think that the strange destiny of this devoted province had not yet been accomplished, and that, while other European countries are rejoicing in the sunlight of civilisation, it should have fallen a prey scarcely seventy years since to a new power from the north, more overwhelming and rapacious than any of those Asiatic hordes to whose incursions it had hitherto been exposed.

Nor is the condition of the Crimea improved under the sway of a government professing a higher state of moral and intellectual advancement than had characterised its Mongolian predecessors. Indeed, this questionable superiority only evidenced itself in the means Russia employed to acquire this much-coveted

territory, since to the destructive inroads of barbarians she added those political intrigues which are more in accordance with the notions of modern times, and of a people eminently qualified to practise them.

The Khans of Crim Tartary had moved the seat of government from the rocky fortress of Tchoufut Kalè to the lovely valley of the Djurouk Su, and, as tributaries to the Porte, had reigned in their palace of Bagtchè Serai for nearly three centuries, when the bloody war which had been relentlessly carried on between Russia and Turkey, and of which the Crimea had been in some degree the theatre, terminated in the treaty of Kainarjè. Devlit Ghiri, who had been invested with the dignity of Khan by the Sultan, was now deposed, and his brother Jehan, who for some time past had been retained a hostage at St Petersburg (though he nominally held the office of a captain in the imperial guard), was placed upon the throne by the Empress Catharine—an act which was in direct violation of the principal article in this treaty, in which the independence of the Crimea, as well as the free choice of its sovereigns, had been expressly stipulated.

But it was not enough that a prince should be thus forced upon a country, in opposition to the will of the people ; a mere puppet in the hands of Russia, he was compelled to show a marked preference for the power to which he owed his crown, and to introduce so many Russians into his service, that he soon in-

creased the hatred and disgust of his subjects, whose feelings of disaffection were secretly fomented by Russian emissaries, until they broke out into an open revolt of so serious a character as to oblige the Khan to fly to Taman, where he remained until assistance arrived in the shape of a Russian army, which invaded the Crimea, and restored him to the throne from which he had been forced.

During this period of the occupation of the province by the Russians, the most atrocious cruelties were perpetrated upon those who had been instigated to share in the revolt. So anxious did Russia profess herself to prevent the recurrence of such an event, that a proposal was made to the Khan to retire from the throne upon a pension of 100,000 rubles a-year, resigning his crown into the safe keeping of the imperial government—an offer which was entitled to some consideration in the presence of an overwhelming army ready to enforce its acceptance. The luckless prince, whose residence at the Russian court had taught him to estimate truly the value of promises emanating from such a quarter, persisted for some time in his refusal, but he found himself ultimately obliged to submit to the terms proposed, and, as he had but too justly anticipated, was confined as a prisoner at Kaluga, in which character he was, of course, considered undeserving of his pension.

After in vain petitioning to be sent to St Petersburg, he was consigned, at his own request, to the tender mercies of the Turks. By them he was

banished to Rhodes, where he soon after fell a victim to the bow-string ;—so terminated the inglorious career of the last of the Khans. An imperial ukase, issued by the Empress Catharine, annexed this magnificent province to her fast-extending empire. No wonder she thought it necessary to congratulate the Prince Potemkin, in the words of the Russian chronicler, “upon the address and good fortune with which he had managed this important operation.”

As my friend was attacked with a return of the fever and ague from which he had suffered on the Volga, we remained at Bagtchè Serai some days. I could not but rejoice at the delay, however much I regretted its cause, and the discomforts of our lodging for an invalid. Although it was now getting late in the year, the heat was excessive ; and the swarms of flies, which seem to delight in Mahomedans more than in the professors of any other faith, rendered rest by day almost out of the question.

Our manner of living, however, was wonderfully improved. After our first experience of Tartar kitchens, we determined to attempt a new mode of proceeding. Accordingly, we first paid a visit to the butcher, selecting, at his recommendation, the most eligible joint. Next we proceeded to the baker, where, after tasting every description of Tartar fancy-bread, we at last discovered one species that we could tolerate. Thence we resorted to the vegetable market, which was well supplied. I observed great quantities of bringals and other tropical produce.

Contenting ourselves with some potatoes, we returned heavily laden to the soup-kitchen, and deposited our purchases with the cook, who seemed utterly at a loss to divine our intentions. He promised, however, implicitly to follow our directions in trying to roast the mutton ; and in the evening, upon our return from the day's sight-seeing, we picked up our dinner, which was presented to us in a large tin dish, and, bearing aloft our steaming mutton and potatoes, triumphantly paraded the main street of the town for a quarter of a mile, and found, upon reaching our khan, that we had every reason to congratulate ourselves on our success.

As our little crib adjoined the public coffee-room, we had only to open the door to be spectators of the novel scenes it usually afforded. Here were collected a number of picturesque old Tartars, seated cross-legged in little wooden pens, incessantly smoking chibouks or nargillehs, and drinking their thick coffee out of cups resembling large brass thimbles. They seldom spoke to one another, but puffed away most imperturbably on their carpeted divans, where I used often to join them.

There is a pleasant dreaminess in all Oriental habits which insensibly asserts its influence over the stranger. I was disappointed, however, to find that the deliciously-enervating Turkish bath was modified by the Tartar into a series of ablutions far less luxurious. At the same time, I much preferred it to the extravagant treatment of the Russians : for the birch

twigs which they energetically apply to produce a healthy glow (a result very soon attained) are here substituted woollen gloves ; and a bunch of cotton dipped in soap-suds performs the cleansing process, instead of that violent hydropathic treatment—those alternate buckets of boiling and iced water, which render a Russian bath a terrifying ordeal to a novice. So far the mode of proceeding in a Tartar bath is *à la Turque* ; but in the middle of the Tauric sudatorium there is no deep pool of water ever increasing in temperature, in which the bather revels for an indefinite time, in a parboiled condition. Here he stretches himself, in a state of nudity, upon an unbearably hot slab of marble, upon which he is rolled about, and scrubbed, and splashed. In fact, the difference between a Turkish and a Tartar bath is simply this, that in the one you are boiled, in the other fried. I infinitely prefer the boiling process, particularly when it is succeeded by shampooing and coffee, which are not the invariable accompaniments among the Tartars.

One day we strolled up the valley in which Bagtchè Serai lies almost concealed ; and passing through the narrow gorge in which it terminates, and which contains caverns occupied only by gypsies, we suddenly emerged from the deep shadow of precipitous cliffs upon a dark mysterious glen, heavily wooded with majestic oaks and beech trees. A winding path dived into its sombre recesses, and we were soon wandering through a maze of tombstones, formed in the shape of sarcophagi, and covered with Hebrew

inscriptions. This was the valley of Jehoshaphat—for centuries the cemetery of the Karaïte Jews, who still love to lay their bones beside those of their ancestors; so that the sleeping inhabitants of the valley of Jehoshaphat far outnumber the population of Karaïtes in any one town in the Crimea.

For nearly a mile did we follow the little path, always surrounded by these touching mementoes of a race who, in whatever part of the world they may be scattered, still retain the profoundest veneration for a spot hallowed by such sacred associations. The grove terminates suddenly near a frightful precipice, from the dizzy edge of which a magnificent view is obtained.

A few miles distant, the conical rock of Tepèker-man rises abruptly from the broken country, its beetling crags perforated with innumerable mysterious caverns and chambers. Beyond, the Tchatir Dag, with the elevated sea-range of which it is part, forms the background to the rich and varied landscape.

Following the line of the calcareous cliffs upon which we stood, we reached a point where the prospect in the opposite direction was still more striking. To the right, the dilapidated old fortress of Tchoufut Kalè crowned the nearest height, while the monastery of Uspenskoï, built into the face of the overhanging rock, looked as if it had been excavated by the inhabitants of stony Petra, rather than by monks of the Greek Church. Here, too, compressed within narrow limits, lay the old Tartar capital, almost hidden

by the gardens which clothe the valley in a mantle of richest green. Lower down, the precipices soften into gentle slopes, and the cultivation spreads over a great extent of country, through which the Djurouk Su meanders until it falls into the Black Sea, that bounds the western horizon.

When the Tartar Khans deserted Tchoufut Kalè for the lovely vale below, this singular stronghold became again exclusively the residence of the Karaite Jews, who had lived there from time immemorial, and who are naturally bound to it by the strongest feelings of reverence and affection, since it has been alike the cradle of their sect, and the rock upon which they have ever found a secure refuge in times of persecution.

As the population was said to be entirely Jewish, we expected to find Tchoufut Kalè filled with picturesque groups of handsomely dressed men and lovely maidens ; but we passed through the archway, and along the streets, to which the living rock answered the purpose of pavement, and still, to our astonishment, not a soul was to be seen. A few dogs flew at us, and obliged us to perambulate the rest of the town armed with stones. It seemed quite empty, for not only were the public thoroughfares deserted, but we could get no answer at any of the doors at which we knocked ; so that I was beginning to suspect that the last inhabitant must have recently got some one to bury him in the valley of Jehoshaphat, when a husky voice murmured something through a

crack in a shutter, and presently a decrepid stone-blind old man, who might have been the individual in question, hobbled out with a stick, and offered to conduct us to the synagogue. On our way we came upon quite a crowd, consisting of two more old men and a boy, who attached themselves to us. With them we entered a mausoleum containing the tomb of a Tartar princess, who had been seduced by a nobleman, and carried off to a Genoese fortress : her melancholy history formed the subject of the long inscription which covered the tombstone.

The venerable rabbi, who now appeared to conduct us to the synagogue, was the highest ecclesiastical authority of the Karaïte church ; and it was strange to find perched upon this inaccessible cliff the headquarters of a sect whose members are scattered over Russia, Poland, and Egypt.

The synagogue was a plain building, differing in no respect, to my uninitiated eye, from an ordinary Jewish place of worship. We looked at some magnificently bound copies of the Old Testament in manuscript. The books of Moses only are printed and taught in the schools. The Karaïtes profess to have the Old Testament in its most genuine state.

The derivation of their name I took upon Richter's authority to be *kara* and *ite* ; words signifying, in Arabic, black dog—a not unlikely epithet to be applied by Mahomedans to this despised race. A more generally received and probably correct derivation, however, seems to be from the word *kara*,

Scripture—because they hold simply to the letter of Scripture, not admitting the authority of the Talmud, or the interpretations of the rabbis. The Talmudists accuse the Karaïtes of retaining the errors of the Sadducees. This is not entitled to much weight, coming from so hostile a quarter. There is, however, no doubt that the two sects differ in many material points from one another ; as, for instance, in the different degrees of relationship forbidden in marriage, in their rules controlling the succession of inheritance, and more especially in the entire recognition of polygamy. According to Rabbinites, their schism is of comparatively recent date ; the Karaïtes themselves, however, contend that their separation from the main stem took place prior to the return from the Babylonish captivity. Like all Jews, they display extraordinary care in the education of their children, who are publicly instructed in the synagogues.

About five thousand Karaïtes are resident in Poland, who acknowledge the old rabbi of Tchoufut Kalè as their spiritual chief. They are said originally to have emigrated from the Crimea.

But it is not by the difference which exists upon points of doctrine or civil discipline that the stranger can at once distinguish the Karaïte from the Talmudist, but by the strange contrast which is invariably presented in the lives and characters of the members of these opposing sects. The Karaïte merchant enjoys everywhere so high a reputation for probity, that throughout the Crimea his word is

considered equal to his bond. How singular that branches of the same tree should bear fruit so dissimilar, as to be distinguished by those extremes of honesty and dishonesty which have become a proverbial characteristic in each case. To what can we ascribe this honourable distinction which the Karaïtes have thus acquired, but to their principles of strict adherence to the letter of the Old Testament alone, to the exclusion of those traditions and rabbinical interpretations which their brethren have allowed to supersede the authority of the inspired record?—and this is a conclusion which, however palpable, it is not superfluous to draw, since there are those who, in our own day, in an enlightened country, and in a Christian church, may be supposed to have a fellow-feeling for the Talmudist, as they themselves are engaged in a somewhat similar process.

As almost all the Karaïtes are engaged in trade or manufacture, and as they observe the most scrupulous honesty in their dealings, it has naturally followed that they are a prosperous and thriving community; while, as if an exception had been made in favour of this portion of that interesting people whose unhappy destiny has been so wonderfully accomplished, probably the only settlement exclusively Jewish which still exists is the fortress of Tchoufut Kalè—a refuge which God seems to have provided for those only who worship Him purely and in the manner of their forefathers. The population of Tchoufut Kalè has, however, dwindled down to a

very small remnant, since trade has increased, and additional facilities have been afforded for settling in more convenient positions than upon the summit of one of the highest crags in the Crimea. The population of the seaport of Eupatoria is composed mainly of Karaïtes, nearly two thousand of whom are now resident there—and some of these are wealthy merchants.

I no longer wondered that the streets were silent, or that the valley of Jehoshaphat was so fully garnished with tombstones, when I learnt that all devout Karaïtes scattered through the Crimea, when increasing infirmities warn them of approaching dissolution, are brought hither to die. There was something touching in this last tribute to the spot endeared by so many associations ; and I could not accuse of a mawkish sentimentality those members of this singular sect who desired to lay their bones beside those of their forefathers in this lovely vale of Jehoshaphat.

There are only two entrances to the fort ; and the massive gates are locked every night. We descended a long flight of steps cut out of the living rock to the well of delicious water which supplies the inhabitants, the situation of which, at the bottom of a valley, and far below the walls, would render the impregnable position of the fort utterly valueless in time of war. At this well is usually stationed a man who fills the water-skins borne by donkeys to their master above, both the consigner and the con-

signee being probably too old to accompany these sagacious animals on the numerous trips which are, nevertheless, so essential to the comfort of the inhabitants.

Following the left bank of the ravine, we reached the monastery of the Uspenskoï, or the Assumption of the Virgin Mary, where galleries are suspended upon the face of a lofty precipice, beneath the stupendous rocks out of which the chambers are hewn, and out of which also are cut the flight of steps by which they are approached. There are only ten rooms and a small church at present excavated ; but the work is progressing, and the limited number of monks which now compose the fraternity will probably be augmented with the accommodation.

The monastery is said to have originated at the time of the persecution of the Greek Church by the Mahomedans, when its members were not allowed to worship in buildings. In some places the windows are mere holes in the face of the rock, while in others the front is composed of solid masonry. A wooden verandah before the church is supported over the massive bells.

About twenty thousand pilgrims resort hither annually in the month of August. Altogether it is a curious place, and harmonises well with the strange scenery in which it is situated ; so that the monks deserve some credit for adding to the charms of a spot already possessing so many attractions ; and this is probably the only benefit their presence is likely to confer upon the community.

We mounted the steep crags above the town to take one last look at the Seraglio of Gardens before we bade it adieu ; and as the rays of the setting sun tinged the whole sky, and shed a warm glow over the palace of the Khans, we were reminded of their glory, so short-lived, and so bright while it lasted, of which all that remained was the lovely scene before us : but the glory of the Khans was set for ever !



Tartar Guide



Mangoup Kalé.

CHAPTER XXII.

ASCENT TO A DESERTED FORTRESS—MANGOUP KALÈ : ITS HISTORY—
THE CAPE OF THE WINDS—PICTURESQUE RUINS—AN AGREEABLE
ROAD—TARTAR TRAVELLING—SHOEING A BULLOCK—PROSPECTS OF
CRIM TARTARY—THE OESEMBASH PASS—VIEW FROM THE SUMMIT
—DESCENT TO YALTA.

It was no easy matter to get away from Bagtchè Serai. We had been in treaty with sundry Tartars for horses to take us over the mountains to Yalta ; but, like true Easterns, they were most unflinching in

driving a bargain ; and it was not until a wholesome competition was established that we came to terms with a man who showed us some wiry-looking nags, and promised to come to the khan sufficiently early to enable us to accomplish the long day's work in prospect.

As we were going back to Yalta, we thought we could dispense with the services of Richter for the future, and he accordingly took his departure for Simpheropol, when we rode out of the town on our way to Mangoup. We had been most fortunate in stumbling upon so useful an ally : he was thoroughly good-natured and honest, though a Russian subject. As he came from the German provinces on the Baltic, he was distinguished by none of the national characteristics, except that of never changing his clothes while travelling ; a circumstance which, while it reconciled me to the separation, was, it is fair to say, almost unavoidable in his case.

It was a beautiful morning as we jogged, for the last time, down the main street, seated on uncomfortable saddles, behind which our bags were strapped. Our road lay to the eastward of that by which we had come from Sevastopol, and in a few hours we re-entered the lonely vale of Balbeck, just where it emerged from the mountains ; and following the bed of the stream, wound through rich gardens, between lofty precipices, until we reached the base of the noble hill that terminates the glen, and looking up at the ruined walls that crown it, perceived that this was

indeed the celebrated fortress of Mangoup Kalè. There is a deliciously cold spring at the romantic little village of Karolez, at which we refreshed ourselves before commencing the sharp ascent. We found it was impossible to ride up the short cuts which we preferred taking, and were soon all scrambling along the steep face of the hill, despising the winding paths, and caring only for the glorious old ruins above. When we reached the walls, we were for some time at a loss to find a gap by which to enter the fortress. At last we stormed a breach, where the huge stones which had composed the massive walls were heaped together, and found ourselves surrounded on all sides by ruin and desolation.

The uncertainty which hangs over the history of these fragments of former greatness, tends to invest them with a mysterious interest peculiar to themselves. They are strewn so extensively over the surface of the rock, as to leave no doubt of the magnitude and importance which once distinguished the city that crowned this mountain top. They bear the traces of almost every race which has inhabited the Crimea, are pervaded by the very essence of antiquity, and regarded by the Tartars with the profoundest veneration. And they are worthy of it, for they are their own historians ; and an account of their former owners, and the vicissitudes these stones have undergone since they were first hewn from the solid rock, may at a future time

be extracted from them by some antiquarian who has made it the study of his lifetime to worm himself into the confidence of such impenetrable records. Meantime, authorities differ very widely upon this matter. The name is frequently pronounced *Mangoute*. The latter syllable, signifying Goths, may perhaps lead us to suppose that it was derived from the possessors of that principality, of which this was at one time the capital. The Goths were expelled from the low lands by the Huns in the fourth century, and still continued to live in an independent condition, defending themselves in their fastnesses from the attacks of those barbarians who successively possessed themselves of the remainder of the Tauric peninsula. According to some authorities, Mangoup remained the capital of the Gothic principality until it was taken by the Turks in the sixteenth century ; while others suppose that, after the conquest of the Crimea by the Khazars, it became a Greek fortress, and so remained until it fell into the hands of the Genoese, at the same time with the Greek colonies on the coast. This is probably the correct view, as the greater part of the remains are Grecian. Professor Pallas calls Mangoup "an ancient Genoese city, which appears to have been the last resort of the Ligurians after they were driven from the coast." Still the chapel, which is here excavated from the rock, and the images of saints, which he describes as painted on the walls, but which I did not observe, may be traces of the Christian Goths no less

than of the Genoese ; but it is extremely improbable that such is the case.

In 1745 Mangoup was occupied by a Turkish garrison for twenty years, after which it was taken possession of by the Khan of the Crimea. It had been for many years inhabited almost exclusively by Karaïte Jews. These gradually dwindled away, until they totally disappeared about sixty years ago, and have left nothing behind them but the ruins of their synagogue and a large cemetery, containing tombs similar to those amid which we had wandered in the valley of Jehoshaphat.

There is very little left of the massive buildings which once adorned this famous town, except the foundations. It was quite a work of difficulty to pick our way through the maze of ruins which were scattered around us. The lofty calcareous promontory upon which the fortress is perched, is about a mile long, and a quarter of a mile broad. Upon three sides it is surrounded by frightful precipices, while that by which alone it is accessible is defended by castellated towers, placed at intervals in the massive wall through which we had entered. At right angles with it, and intersecting the narrow promontory, are the remains of another wall ; and the most perfect building now existing is a square fort built into it, two storeys high, and pierced with loopholes for musketry. Passing through another opening, we reached the most eastern point, and discovered for the first time that the whole length of the upper edge of the

plateau was perforated by small chambers cut out of the solid rock, and approached by stairs from the upper surface. Descending into one of these chambers, at the most projecting point of the promontory, called the Cape of the Winds, I tremblingly approached the aperture, which had once served for a window, but was now broken away to a level with the floor, and from the dizzy height gazed over wild ravines, and peaceful valleys, and undulating plains. At last I perceived the harbour of Sevastopol, with little black specks upon its surface, significant of the change which has come over the destinies of this singular country, where an impregnable fort has been superseded by an *invincible* armada, and the castellated walls of the Genoese stronghold have given place to the three-tiered batteries of a Russian arsenal.

Many of the chambers I was now inspecting are from fifteen to twenty feet square, and connected by stairs; but the work of exploring required nerves rather stronger than people who inhabit houses instead of eagles' nests usually possess, and the steps hewn out of the face of the giddy cliff were more picturesque to look at than agreeable to traverse. Who the dwellers in these singular cells can have been, it is difficult to conjecture; but they were probably inhabited before the town was built upon the rock above.

If the ruins of Mangoup Kalè possessed no other merit, they serve at least as an attraction to mount the cliffs upon which they are situated, and the

labour of the ascent would be amply repaid by the view alone. But when to the beauties of the distant landscape we could ever add a romantic foreground—when we could hide in the mysterious caverns, and look through the jagged clefts in the rock as from some prison window—or, sheltering ourselves under an old tower, bring the ruins of the synagogue into the corner of the picture—we felt that they themselves formed the greatest charm of the view to which they had allured us, and could only regret being obliged so soon to leave a spot thus richly endowed with all that could compensate to the traveller for the annoyances to be met with in the country which it serves to adorn.

We descended another road, and passed through an old arched gateway, once the principal entrance to the citadel. I was able to gain a more correct idea of the configuration of this part of the Crimea from the fortress of Mangoup Kalè than I had yet obtained. A precipitous limestone range extends nearly east and west, parallel to the sea range ; and upon the edge of the stupendous cliffs are perched the forts of Tchoufut Kalè and Mangoup Kalè. The whole of the country intervening between these ranges, through which our road now lay, is intersected by lovely valleys, and watered by clear mountain-streams ; their banks are highly cultivated, and frequent tufted groves betray the existence of the villages which they conceal. This tract is inhabited solely by Tartars, who seem to cling to their highland glens with the

tenacity characteristic of mountaineers. They are a hardy, hospitable race, totally different from their lowland brethren.

Although the sun was still very powerful, our narrow road was in general completely protected from its rays by the spreading boughs of noble trees that met overhead and formed a covered avenue. Occasionally we wound round a hill-side, and entered upon a new valley more enchanting than the last. Our path being often incommoded by so much luxuriant foliage and vegetation, we adopted the rocky bed of the stream, and so paddled ankle-deep through the clear sparkling water, the mountains from which it flowed becoming more and more distinct as we approached their base. These brooks, so convenient and harmless now, become furious torrents in the winter.

We did not often enter the villages, but picked up an equestrian or two, who joined us out of curiosity, and rode on ahead with our guide, discussing such unusual visitors, no doubt. No Tartar ever dreams of walking from one village to another ; but when he wants to pay a visit to his neighbour, like a true country gentleman he rides over to him ; and if he has not so good a horse as the squire, he has scenery at least which the other might covet, and can beguile the way with a contemplation of its beauties, if competent so to enjoy himself. To the traveller furnished with a government order, the Tartars are bound to provide horses at any village where it may be produced. These are often poor-looking animals, but

active and sure-footed, and admirably adapted for the rocky passes which they are obliged to traverse ; indeed, they deserve great credit for the way in which they seem to cling to a mountain side, for they are shod with a flat plate of iron, with a hole at the frog, which may be useful in stony deserts for protecting the hoof, but must cause many a slip over the smooth rock.

Not content with shoeing their horses thus, the Tartars treat their oxen in like manner. I saw the process at Bagtchè Serai, and was at a loss to conceive at first what was going on. The animal was upon the

broad of his back, and there secured—a man sitting upon the head. The four legs, tied together, were sticking straight up in the air, and the smith was hammering away, enabled by his



Shoeing a Bullock.

convenient position to operate all the more skillfully. There was something excessively ludicrous in the whole scene, though, to judge from the low moaning which issued from beneath the assistant seated on the animal's head, the poor brute found it no laughing matter.

It was melancholy to think that the inhabitants of these lovely valleys were gradually disappearing

under the blighting influence which Russia appears to exercise over her Moslem subjects. Of late years the Tartars have been rapidly diminishing, and now number about a hundred thousand, or scarcely half the entire population of the Crimea. Their energy, too, seems declining with their numbers. Whole tracts of country susceptible of a high state of cultivation, and once producing abundantly, are now lying waste ; their manufactures deteriorating, their territorial wealth destroyed, their noble families becoming extinct, their poor ground down by Russian tax-gatherers, and swindled out of their substance by dishonest sub-officials.

Ere long the flat-roofed cottages, now buried amid the luxuriant vegetation of clustering fruit-trees, will crumble into dust, and with them the last remains of that nation who once occupied an important position among European powers. Is the only Mahomedan state still existing in the West to share the same fate as the kingdom of Crim Tartary ?

It was late in the afternoon when we arrived at the romantic village of Oesembash, situate at the foot of the mountains, and our guide insisted that it was impossible to cross over the pass to Yalta after the day's work we had already performed. However, though the village looked very clean and respectable, we had promised ourselves a nearer approach to civilisation in our night-quarters than it could afford. Dreading, besides, an encounter with Tartar fleas, more than the dangers of the Oesembash pass upon a

dark night, we held our guide to his engagement, and pushed on up the steep ravine, in spite of the remonstrances of the villagers, who were disappointed at losing such profitable-looking guests. We followed the water-course until it became too rugged and precipitous, and then took a more winding path; even this was, however, frequently so steep as to render it advisable to dismount. Our guide was comforted by an old Tartar who took advantage of our escort at so late an hour to continue his journey.

The pass from the valley of Oesembash to Yalta is undoubtedly the most beautiful in the Crimea. The views over the country towards Bagtchè Serai are only surpassed by the sublime panorama which meets the eye on reaching the summit. Here, in whatever direction we turn, we are surrounded by magnificent peaks and crags, below which dark pine-woods thickly clothe the mountain side, until, the temperature becoming more genial, they are succeeded upon the south by the vine cultivation of the coast, amid which is placed the little town of Yalta, its white houses reflected in the smooth sea, which here forms a charming bay. To the north, the fertile valleys along which we had been journeying seemed shut out from the rest of the world by lofty walls of limestone, upon which were perched inaccessible forts, to guard the entrance into this enchanted land. Beyond this singular range the distant steppe, like a sea of another colour, stretched away until it became confused and lost in the dim haze which obscured the horizon.

It was a picture in which many different elements seemed combined. The magnificent timber that clothed some of these mountains, to a height of three thousand feet, transported me in imagination back again to tropical scenery ; but the bright autumn tints soon dispelled the delusion of an evergreen jungle. The dark pine-forest which stretched around us might have sheltered the hill-sides of some Norwegian valley, and the cold grey crags above head harmonised with those harsh scenes ; but this was no Norwegian sunset—it was Italian ! and so were those gentle slopes terraced with vines to the shores of the sea that was blue as the sky above it.

The gloom of the fir woods through which our downward path led us was soon merged in the shades of evening ; and at last it became so dark that we were obliged to lead our horses warily down the precipitous gullies, directed by the occasional shouts of our guide, whom we could no longer see. We quite sympathised with our poor beasts as we crawled together into the inn-yard at Yalta. They had carried us for thirteen hours without halt or bait of any sort ; and I have no doubt they experienced better treatment after their hard day's work in the Tartar's stable than we did at the Hotel d'Odessa.



Cave of the Winds, with Sevastopol in the distance.

CHAPTER XXIII.

YALTA—THE GRAND HOTEL : ITS ACCOMMODATION—VOYAGE FROM
YALTA — THE ANCIENT CITY OF CHERSONESUS — OUR FELLOW-
PASSENGERS—THE WAR IN THE CAUCASUS, AND ITS RESULTS—
THE OBJECT OF THE WAR : ITS EFFECTS ON OUR INDIAN POS-
SESSIONS — REFLECTIONS ON RUSSIAN AGGRESSION IN THE EAST
— EUPATORIA — A STARTLING OCCURRENCE, AND UNPLEASANT
RESULTS—NOVEL MODE OF SUPPORTING A THEATRE — ARRIVAL
AT ODESSA—FIRST IMPRESSIONS—THE USE OF A MEDICAL BOARD.

YALTA is a presuming sort of little place; but though so beautifully situated, to judge from the style of architecture which prevails, the inhabitants do not seem inclined to build in harmony with the lovely scenery by which they are surrounded. It possesses, moreover, all the attributes of Cockneyism, and this is at first a little interesting to the stranger, as he

has an opportunity of comparing the Cockneyism of Russia with that of his own country; besides which, there is a sort of civilisation in its very extravagance that savours of home.

There is one attempt at a bathing-machine, which does not look as if it had ever been used; at any rate, we thought it an invasion of the rights of the retired bay, the beauties of which we could occasionally contemplate while swimming about it. There are quantities of ponies, whose persevering owners follow you all over the place with tempting descriptions of Alupka and Orianda. There are a few officers lounging upon the quay in the evening; and if the steamer should chance to be in the bay, the passengers ride about in detachments, staring at everything, like overland travellers at Cairo. There are great quantities of fruit-stalls, the contents of which are most temptingly arranged; but the prices are enormously high, if the stranger should be unwary enough to attempt to buy any of them himself. One street of glaring white houses, in which the principal building is the hotel—a few shops and government offices, erected along the sea-shore, with a most fantastic church, picturesquely situated on a hill above them—at present complete the town of Yalta. It seems, however, destined soon to become a fashionable watering-place for the inhabitants of Sevastopol and Odessa. Scaffoldings are erected in every direction, and the work of building more glaring white houses goes on apace.

The pretensions of the hotel are quite characteristic of the growing importance of the place. It is not a bad type of Russian hotels generally. Upon arriving, the traveller walks through an archway and up a stair, in hopes of seeing somebody. In this he is for some time disappointed ; nor does he gain anything when he at last discovers a slovenly-looking servant, and points indignantly to his baggage below. The answer is extremely polite, expressive of the deepest sympathy on the part of the speaker, who at the same time gently insinuates that he is Prince Galitzen ! (There are about three hundred Prince Galitzens in Russia). Escaping under cover of a profusion of apologies, our traveller opens a number more doors, goes up and down more stairs, and sees another man with a cigar in his mouth. Determined to avoid a similar mistake, he respectfully addresses him in French or German, or, if he can muster enough Russian, in that tongue, and intimates a wish to find the master of the hotel, or some servant. Upon this the gentleman walks off, evidently offended. However, he is soon after heard shouting down the long passages, and turns out to be none other than the landlord himself. Now begins a search for rooms, ending in the occupancy of a small uncarpeted chamber, with a very dirty floor, containing a hard couch, a harder stretcher (dignified with the name of "bed"), a table, and a chair ! This accommodation is cheap at 3s. 4d. a-night. After some wrangling, a basin and jug are thrown into the bargain, and, by way of a piece of

extra luxury, one sheet is spread upon the hard mattress on the stretcher, but this has evidently been a good deal used already. Milk and butter were luxuries quite unknown at the Grand Hotel at Yalta; and eggs were only procurable at an enormous price, while vegetables were unheard-of accompaniments to dinner. There are no means of calling the servant, except by wandering through the passages shouting "Chelaviek." Of course the "chelaviek" is always in a distant part of the establishment when he is wanted; indeed, considering that there is only one, this is not extraordinary.

If he is wise, our traveller will cultivate the acquaintance of Prince Galitzen, who is not the least annoyed at having been mistaken for a servant, but only anxious to maintain the credit of Russian hotels, and the character of his country for civilisation generally. He says that foreigners find the accommodation bad, because they do not travel as he does. With a view of giving his unenlightened English friend the benefit of his experience, he ushers him into the small room occupied by "Madame la Princesse" and five children. The lady, however, is hardly visible amid the piles of bedding with which she is surrounded, and which a number of servants are engaged in unpacking. The cook is rummaging among the sacks of provisions that block up the passage; the children are clustered round their own somovar; and hence it is quite clear that our friend the Prince is independent of everything except a roof; and as

the hotel does not leak, he, of course, is perfectly contented with the accommodation it affords.

Those who travel in Russia, and more particularly in the Crimea, must be prepared not only to rough it, but to pay the prices of first-rate hotels. It is almost to be regretted that the very limited amount of civilisation with which the traveller in the Crimea is tormented, should ever have penetrated to this remote corner of Europe. I infinitely preferred to it the quiet hospitality of a Tartar cottage, where we were entertained by an unsophisticated people, and led an Eastern sort of life. The Crimea is in a most unsatisfactory state, just awakening to a sense of its beauty, and consequently of its capacity to prey upon the few strangers who annually visit it. The day will probably come when the Oesembash will be crossed in a summer as often as the Grimsel, and the Tartar village at its foot converted into a second Lauterbrun. Even now steamers run to Odessa two or three times a-month, from Taganrog or Redout Kalè in the Caucasus, touching at the various ports of Kertch, Theodosia, and Yalta. It was late one evening that we exchanged our comfortless bedroom for a crowded saloon in one of these ; and here, having secured a few square feet of floor as soon as we came on board, we stretched ourselves amid a host of snorers.

Morning found us rounding Cape Chersonesus, the most western point of the Heracleotic Peninsula. Upon these shores, for nearly twelve centuries, the celebrated colony of Cherson flourished, rivalling the

Bosphorites who possessed the eastern extremity of Taurida. A strongly fortified wall, extending from Inkerman to Balaclava, the remains of which still exist, protected the inhabitants of this populous promontory from the inroads of the Tauric and other barbarians. The stupendous cape called by the Tartars *Ai Bûrûm*, or the "The Holy Promontory," has been fixed upon by Pallas as the Parthenium of Strabo ; and here, therefore, the priestess Iphigenia celebrated her bloody rites at the fane of the demon goddess ; while the shipwreck upon these rocks of Orestes, and her escape with him, led to the colonisation of this part of Taurida by the Heracleans.

The monastery of St George, with its green-domed church, its terraces and gardens, are suspended many hundred feet above the sea, and occupy nearly the same position with the ancient Temple of Diana ; while, still farther to the westward, and upon the Peninsula of Phanary, are strewn the ruins of the ancient city of Chersonesus. The whole of this coast has been explored by Pallas, who was guided in his researches by the minute descriptions of Strabo, and who gives a most interesting account of the extensive remains of the new city of Chersonesus, which flourished in the time of the historian. These existed until quite recently in a high state of preservation. Muscovite Vandalism has now, however, demolished the noble gates, together with two forts, and a great portion of the handsome wall by which the city was surrounded ; and the blocks of freestone of which they were com-

posed have been degraded into turning arches in the fortress of Sevastopol—conduct which these venerable stones would not have expected at the hands of the Tauri, whose attacks they had once defied.

After the conquest of Taurida by Rome, Cherson continued to flourish pre-eminently under the rule of princes substantially independent. These ultimately, however, sought the protection of the Byzantine emperors, and in 840 Cherson was made the capital of Khazaria, under the Emperor Theophilus, and remained a place of some importance until the conquest of Taurida by the Tartars, when it became incorporated into the empire of Little Tartary.

We touched at Sevastopol, and picked up a cargo of general officers and ministers of state returning from the grand review. Altogether, we had a most miscellaneous assemblage of passengers on board : hypochondriac old gentlemen from the far-famed baths of Pettiagorsk in the Caucasus, with delicate ladies returning from the same waters, and improving their effect by smoking incessantly ; officers in Cossack regiments, big with the doings of their corps ; German travellers from Circassia, dressed in true Lesghi costume, whose experience there had taught them to be as sceptical as was consistent with politeness of those tales of Russian valour, while they were loud in praises of their foes, and of the country they inhabit, and tell wonderful stories of Schamyl Bey, the indomitable chief, whose residence is the impregnable fortress of Dargo.

It seemed quite the opinion of these impartial spectators of the war in the Caucasus, that the position of Russia in that quarter is every year surrounded with increasing difficulty. The triumphs of the army, which are incessantly sounded in the government papers, generally originate in some disaster, which it is necessary to convert into a victory. According to these veracious records, the Russians have won upon an average about twelve battles a-year for the last twenty-two years, in which the number of Circassians slain must far exceed what the total population of the country was at the commencement of the war. It will be necessary soon to discover some miraculous source from which to draw the inexhaustible supply of mountaineers ever ready to repel their attacks, and to ascribe to some mysterious agency their power of resisting the might of Russia. To us, however, who do not believe these reports, and who have been somewhat enlightened by our experience of a Caffre war, this problem requires no such unnatural solution. It is evident that a nation in which all the males have been following war as an occupation for twenty-two years, must be in first-rate fighting condition ; while the fact of their having during that period always contended with the same enemy, enables them to form a pretty correct estimate of his prowess as compared with their own,—a comparison which cannot but be favourable to themselves, when we look at the results of the war. Each year of successful resistance inspires these tribes with fresh

energy and courage, while it dispirits their invaders. Meantime they are learning the art of war at an enormous expense to Russia, whose efforts to prevent them from obtaining ammunition have driven them to manufacture it themselves.

Hitherto they have been divided by intestine discord, but it was rumoured that Schamyl had at last come to an understanding with some of the other tribes: this was, however, mere report. There can be no doubt that, if a reconciliation could be effected, the organisation of a combined force under the command of the European officers who have long directed the operations of the Circassian army would prove most formidable to Russia. Many of these officers are Poles; while a fellow-passenger who had visited the mines in Siberia assured me that he had himself spoken to two Englishmen who had been taken prisoners while fighting with the mountaineers, and who are now condemned to perpetual labour in chains. Death at the hands of a Cossack would be infinitely preferable to such a fate as this.

If we ask a Russian how it is that the enormous army now serving in the Caucasus does not speedily reduce this tiny province to subjection, we are told that the war might be thus terminated at any moment, but that it is required as a nursery for imperial troops—that it is an institution of the state, so to speak, where raw levies learn their duty, and disaffected soldiers are reduced at once to skeletons and subjection—a sort of military penal settlement absolutely neces-

sary to the wellbeing of the army. Without staying to consider whether it be true or not that Russia requires a permanent foreign war—a sort of external chronic irritation—to insure the healthy condition of her naval and military forces (which, to say the least of it, will always render her an extremely unpleasant neighbour), I think there can be no doubt that, if it were possible, she would gladly terminate *this* struggle at any rate, since it is said to have absorbed almost the entire revenue of Poland for many years ; and, indeed, that such is the case is proved by the frequent overtures for peace which have been made to the Circassian chiefs, who desire nothing better than to be left alone upon their own terms. At the same time, it is evident that the only termination to this war which could be satisfactory to Russia must be the entire subjection of the province, and this she has hitherto been absolutely unable to accomplish.

It is not for the value of this mountainous scrap of territory that Russia desires its annexation ; its total revenue would not furnish one-half the amount that is annually expended upon its conquest. Nor is it because she has any right or title to these mountains. It is said, that it is because the Emperor is piqued by a resistance so obstinate and determined, that he sacrifices thousands of his fellow-creatures here annually. We will do him the justice to suppose that he is actuated by no such unworthy motive, while more substantial reasons exist. It is evidently the independent existence here of restless

tribes, in the midst of provinces so recently subjected to Russian rule, who possess so many sympathies in common with the conquered people which causes the Russian government uneasiness.

So long as these mountaineers have it in their power to bar the only passages by which Russia obtains access to one portion of her vast dominions, so long must the value of the trans-Caucasian provinces be diminished, and the Emperor frustrated in his cherished project of extending the frontier to the southward ; for in case of the dismemberment of the Turkish empire, until Russia conquers Circassia she is clearly not in a position to annex with equal advantage those provinces which, when that dismemberment takes place, she will doubtless expect to fall to her share. At present, therefore, Circassian independence seems to be a formidable barrier to Russian aggression. But when Russian troops can march with impunity across those mighty passes, and acquire new provinces to the south and eastward—when her frontier is conterminous with that of Persia in a great part of that country which is now Turkish, and when her influence over that state will increase with her frontier—when Persia is no longer able to resist her demands, and Cabul only anxious to aid her designs, the tenure by which Great Britain holds her dominion in India will be materially affected, and it may be thus affected sooner than we anticipate ; for surely, during the present crisis of Eastern affairs, these results are not to be deemed altogether speculative.

Let it be remembered that Russian aggression is not confined to Turkey in Europe alone—that the Asiatic frontier of the empire reaches a parallel of latitude two hundred miles to the south of that in which Constantinople is situated—that it is a longer march from the Pruth to Orsova than from the Araxes to the Tigris—that the Muscovite soldiers now stationed on the banks of the former river are more than half-way from Moscow to Peshawur—that the extent of territory which intervenes between Russia and the British provinces in India is not so great as that already acquired from Turkey alone, while the greater portion of it belongs to a power whose fate is indissolubly linked with the tottering fabric of Ottoman independence, now crumbling to pieces under the repeated and vigorous assaults of a most relentless foe. When facts such as these are taken into consideration, the contingency of Russian influence becoming dominant in Persia does not seem very remote, or the extension of the southern frontier of the empire to Herat altogether a chimera ; and even then it is not the probability of an invasion that is to be dreaded, but rather the effect upon the northern provinces of India of the proximity of this new and powerful neighbour, whose secret agents would overrun our provinces, foment dissaffection, disturb the whole system of government, and worthily accomplish the insidious designs of rulers as unscrupulous as themselves.

A further result of Russian aggression in Eastern

Turkey, and one more immediate than those to which I have already alluded, would be the severe blow which our commerce in the Black Sea would inevitably sustain by the annexation of the provinces of Kars and Erzeroum. The enormous trade now carried on by us through Trebisonde is all the more jealously regarded by Russia, because the prohibitive system of the empire, and the inferior quality of her own productions, render her incapable of competing with us in securing and maintaining the commerce of the East. Should these provinces be obtained, however, she will again attempt to monopolise that trade which was thrown into our hands by the blind policy that has already closed the route through the trans-Caucasian provinces. These were topics, however, upon which it was almost impossible to touch, in conversing with our fellow-passengers, who were never to be betrayed into giving an opinion upon a political subject by any plot, however insidiously designed to entrap them.

We touched at Eupatoria, an uninteresting town situated upon the low steppe, but considered the most thriving port in the Crimea. It owes its prosperity to the great number of Karaïte Jews resident here. These successful traders compose the greater part of the population, and the handsomest synagogue of which the sect can boast adorns the town.

It is a run of eighteen hours from Eupatoria to Odessa, and the wind, which freshened to a sharp breeze before evening, produced effects which ren-

dered the crowded saloon anything but a pleasant resting-place. Too well accustomed to such scenes, however, to be affected, my sound slumber was only disturbed once during the night by a confused murmur of earnest voices and some heavy treading near me. The whole seemed so mixed up with a disagreeable dream, that upon awaking in the morning I easily accounted for a vague feeling of discomfort which seemed to oppress me, and was rather surprised upon looking into the faces of those who were awake, and probably had never been asleep, to discover an uneasy expression, denoting feelings somewhat akin to my own ; and some one said that, restlessly tossing upon the hard floor of the saloon, he had suddenly stretched out his hand, a few hours before, and started as it came in contact with the cold clammy face of his next neighbour. The low moaning which we could hear through the half-opened door of the ladies' cabin, proceeded from the wife of the unhappy man who had thus suddenly expired without having given a moment's warning to the roomful of people by whom he was surrounded. He was a quiet, retiring person, and few people had spoken to him, though he had been on board three or four days ; those who had were evidently proud of the distinction, and gave the result of their observations to knots of nervous inquirers. It is not often that Russians moralise ; but one conceited old privy-councillor, who generally confined his conversation to a discussion of his own merits, favoured the company

with a few remarks which he considered appropriate, and incidentally mentioned the death of the Duke of Wellington.

Had I ever doubted that the effect produced by a piece of thrilling intelligence depends in a great measure on the circumstances under which it is received, I should cease to do so since that hour on which I first heard that two people were dead, neither of whom I had ever spoken to in my life. In the one case, personal contiguity with the deceased invested the circumstance of his death with a strange and peculiar interest; in the other, how many old associations were revived and recollections called up by the mention of a name so familiar and so deeply venerated—while the tidings seemed all the more startling, since they were uttered by those who could sympathise with none of these feelings.

The news that we were close to Odessa soon changed the current of ideas on board. It was a glorious morning, and people easily succeeded in shaking off their gloom as we entered the noble harbour and anchored beneath the walls of the chief mercantile city in the empire. The young ladies from the baths were gathered in groups upon deck, as they said they found the ladies' cabin and the company of the widow *triste*, and talked gaily in anticipation of the approaching season. The quay, only a few yards distant, was crowded with happy faces, as friends long parted discovered one another. Soon it became apparent that their embraces were to

be postponed, and one by one the crowd vanished. The young ladies experienced a violent revulsion of feeling, and really began to wish from their hearts that the poor man had not died, as the cause of our detention dawned upon them. The privy-councillor looked unutterable things, and was evidently determined not to be kept on board by anything so purely unimportant. An aide-de-camp of Prince Woronzoff's said that he and his despatches should land though nobody else did, except the privy-councillor, whose rank, he admitted, rendered it out of the question that he should carry the infection. The other passengers for the most part said that they had expected this all along, but had never thought it worth while to say so. A boat-load of medical officers now raised the excitement to its utmost pitch. They were to report upon the infectious nature of the disease of which our fellow-passenger had died.

I was not in a position at that time, from my ignorance of the true circumstances upon which our destinies depended, to sympathise fully with the alternations of hope and despair which agitated the breasts of my fellow-passengers. Those trembled for our fate who knew that the person who supplied the quarantine with provisions was also the lessee of the Odessa theatre. As this Odessa theatre pays very badly, it is a government regulation that the same man who obtains the lucrative contract for supplying the quarantine shall also rent the theatre. The consequence is, that no opportunity is lost of disco-

vering the infectious nature of the diseases which may exist on board any of the ships in the harbour, while the number of persons thus imprisoned, the long duration of their quarantine, and the exorbitant prices charged, produce more than is sufficient to set off against the losses incurred by a bad season ; and so it is evident that in proportion to the increase of sickness in the year is the company at the Odessa theatre improved, and the enjoyment of the Odessa public heightened. Indeed, it was rumoured that in the event of another unusually severe plague at Constantinople, the manager had expressed his intention of engaging Rachel.

Presently a more cheerful report went abroad, and people were delighted to discover that the deceased was brother-in-law to the governor of Odessa. Of course it was out of the question to suppose that the unhappy widow could now be put in quarantine. Such, indeed, turned out to be the case. The victualling officer of that establishment was utterly unable to compete with the overwhelming interest thus brought to bear. The medical board found that the disease was not infectious, according to instructions probably received before leaving the shore ; and those who pleased were thus enabled to honour the theatre that very night with their presence, and share directly in that entertainment, to the support of which we had all been so nearly obliged to contribute.

CHAPTER XXIV.

ARRIVAL AT ODESSA — FIRST IMPRESSIONS — EUROPEAN ASPECT OF THE TOWN — THE INTERNAL COMMERCE OF THE EMPIRE : ITS INFLUENCE ON FOREIGN MARKETS — THE MOSCOW AND ODESSA RAILWAY — ARISTOCRATIC BEETROOT-GROWERS — THE ODESSA POLICE-OFFICE — HOW TO BRIBE JUDICIOUSLY — THE ISLE OF SERPENTS — THE SOULINA MOUTH OF THE DANUBE — THE FAIR AT ISMAEL — THE CONDITION OF BESSARABIA, AS COMPARED WITH THE DANUBIAN PRINCIPALITIES.

It was with mingled feelings of gratitude and triumph that I found myself climbing the steep hill which leads from the quay into the town of Odessa. I felt thankful that we had escaped three weeks' quarantine ; that we had passed through the custom-house without having our luggage examined ; that there was a prospect at last of a return to some of the luxuries of civilised life after a somewhat arduous journey. And I felt triumphant, because I could now for the future fearlessly condemn Russian hotels, discuss the merits of Russian shops, and depreciate Muscovite civilisation in general, without being told that I was not in a position to judge of any of these subjects from never having been at Odessa.

Hitherto my life had been rendered miserable by repeated allusions to the "Russian Florence." Some infatuated Odessans on board the steamer impressed upon me for two days and nights that nothing I had seen at Moscow or St Petersburg could give me even a faint conception of the glories of Odessa, which, according to them, combined in itself the charms of all the capitals in Europe. The statues and the opera were Italian ; the boulevards and shops, French ; the clubs conducted upon English principles ; and the hotels unequalled in Europe—the whole forming attractions which may surpass my most sanguine anticipations.

It struck me as somewhat singular, notwithstanding, to be told, upon asking what means existed of leaving this enchanting spot, that we should find it necessary to buy a carriage and post, as no diligence had as yet been established. Odessa, probably, is the only town in Europe containing upwards of a hundred thousand inhabitants, which cannot boast some public means of conveyance other than a post telèga, which is infinitely more barbarous than a Cape bullock-waggon, and only meant for the conveyance of feld-jägers and despatches.

It was evident that these benighted inhabitants of Odessa praised their city in utter ignorance of the merits of others. It could not seem strange to them that a pair of sheets should be charged a ruble extra in the best hotels, since they seldom or ever made use of them at home ; while it was not to be wondered at that

jugs and basins should seem superfluities to those who followed the mode of washing adopted on board the Russian steamer, which consisted in each man's trickling a little water into his friend's hands—so little, indeed, that but a very few drops of the precious liquid were spilt. Our exertions to obtain a basin on board evidently caused us to be looked upon as bad travellers, who did not conform to the manners of the country they were in.

The change from the climate, inhabitants, and customs of the East, to those of the bleak North, was very marked on our arrival at Odessa. We were again surrounded by sheepskins, and pierced with a sharp east wind that howled over the desolate steppe. Here were no lofty peaks to shelter us, nor summer sun to warm us; winter seemed fairly to have set in the day we arrived, with the view of chasing us out of Russia. However, we could not go until we had been advertised a certain number of days in the papers, for the benefit of imaginary creditors. Fortunately we had given notice of our intended departure before we arrived, whereby the length of our stay was considerably diminished. Meantime we found plenty to amuse us in the greatest mercantile emporium in Russia.

It must be admitted that Odessa is very cosmopolitan in its character. Almost every country in Europe has its representative here, and the principal streets are filled with an immense variety of costume. Indeed, Odessa has an air of business and activity

about it quite foreign to Russian towns generally ; and this is doubtless owing to its rapid growth and mixed population. There is a great deal more liberty enjoyed by the inhabitants than by those of any other town in the empire ; and I was struck by the unwonted freedom of smoking and conversation which prevailed among those with whom I mixed. The evident effort made to be as little Russian as possible, is a significant comment upon the inconsistency of the inhabitants, who, while they maintain the superior excellence of everything national, seem chiefly desirous of sinking their nationality, and, with that facility of imitation peculiar to the Russian character, seek to assimilate themselves as much as possible to other European nations. It follows therefore, that, apart from the novelty with which this city is invested by its commercial character, in a country affording no encouragement to trade, there is little to interest in its broad glaring streets, where clouds of white dust overwhelm the passengers, and rows of stumpy trees are reduced almost to the same colour as the tall houses behind them.

Odessa has existed to serve a definite purpose, and in that respect its case is altogether an exceptional one : it has been forced on in spite of government, by virtue of being a free port, and of possessing the most saleable commodity in Europe as its principal article of commerce. As its exports exceed the imports by two-thirds, its prosperity cannot be said to have a very firm foundation ; indeed, a war with

Russia would be fraught with more serious consequences to these provinces than to the country which derives its supply of corn from them. In the one case the ruin would be permanent and irretrievable ; in the other, the temporary inconvenience would doubtless be very great, but a new source of supply would surely be found, and one in all probability not liable to such sudden and violent interruptions. However, a consideration of the commercial interests of the Russian empire would never turn the scale with government one way or the other in a question of peace or war.

The mere fact that the great proportion of the trade of Russia is in the hands of foreign merchants, while it tends to render the government indifferent to consequences affecting their prosperity, proves how little worthy the natives themselves are of any other treatment than that which they now experience. But Russia alone is not injured by those influences of despotic government and an apathetic population, which, reacting upon each other, are fatal to the commerce of the empire. Unfortunately for the rest of Europe, they conspire to raise the price of Russian productions to an inconceivable degree ; nor is it difficult to trace the origin of such a result.

The only merchants who are able to engage directly in foreign commerce are those belonging to the first or second guilds—the latter only to a limited extent. The duty for a license which confers this

advantage is so high, and the capital required by government, before it can be obtained, is so great, that comparatively few are enabled to embark in the extensive transactions involved by foreign trade. So effectually is this system calculated to prevent any addition to the Russian mercantile community, that notwithstanding the Black Sea trade, so extensive and so recently called into existence, there are only four more merchants in the first guild now than there were fifteen years ago ; while, on the other hand, the number of peasants holding certificates enabling them to trade *within* the empire, is increased by one-third during the same time,—thus showing that the commercial relations of the interior have improved by virtue of that foreign trade, which has not benefited the merchants of a higher order. At the same time, it is evident that it is highly prejudicial to the true interests of commerce that it should be so largely exercised by an ignorant and half-civilised peasantry, who are only allowed certificates by the year, and are still in the condition of serfs. The palpable effect of such a state of things must be a total absence of that credit which is a primary condition to the mercantile prosperity of a country ; and the merchants on the coast are to a great extent at the mercy of these petty traders, who scruple at no species of dishonest practice which may insure them quick returns. It is this class who frequent the numerous large fairs throughout the country, and by means of them exercise an indirect influence upon

the foreign markets ; and when, therefore, we find that the supplemental value with which articles are burdened, before they reach the port of export, is sixty per cent upon the productions of the soil, and twenty-five per cent on those of industry, no other result can be expected in a country where the want of capital, the want of enterprise, the want of liberty, the want of roads, and the want of honesty, combine to produce it.

Although there is no macadamised road leading in any one direction out of Odessa, yet even the magnificent rivers which afford such evident means of communication with the interior are not taken advantage of. The Pruth, the Dnieper, the Dniester, and the Bug, are all either navigable or might easily be made so. At present little else but wood-rafts float down their broad waters. No private company has enterprise, or rather hardihood enough, to attempt an undertaking which government might at any moment ruin ; and even now, almost all speculations in Russia are carried on by rash foreigners, who have not lived long enough in the country to know better. I think, therefore, it will be some time before a railway is completed to Moscow, though government now offers a guarantee of four per cent. It will be a singular anomaly if a railway should connect Moscow and Odessa in the absence of any macadamised road between the two ; and one none the less striking, because only to be found elsewhere in America.

Private speculations, however, if undertaken by men of rank, are occasionally protected at the expense of the whole community. Thus, lately, in the neighbourhood of Odessa, the cultivation of beetroot, and extraction of sugar from it, was carried on to a considerable extent by the large landed proprietors of the adjoining provinces. Notwithstanding most praiseworthy exertions, these aristocratic beetroot-growers were totally unable to make their speculation remunerative, and many of them must have been ruined had not the legislature stepped in and prohibited the sale of any other sugar. The consequence is, that the inhabitants are obliged to buy sugar at a hundred per cent higher than the price at which our colonial sugar could be imported into the country. It is some satisfaction to know that, notwithstanding this iniquitous regulation, combined with the system of forced labour, the beetroot-growers are unable to cultivate with profit.

And yet these very nobles are none the less objects of commiseration. If, instead of attempting to protect their speculation, government would take off some of the heavy taxes under which they groan, far more lasting benefit would be conferred on them. The tax levied on the nobility, for instance, by means of passports, would be looked upon as unendurable in any other country. In the first place, it is with the greatest difficulty that a permission to travel, or leave of absence for two years, is obtained by a Russian, however high his rank; and then it is only

granted upon payment of a sum amounting to eighty pounds a-head for each member of the family.

Fortunately for strangers, the government does not make a similar demand upon them. Still it costs travellers no little trouble and annoyance to go through the formalities necessary to enable them to quit the empire. The ordeal is more severe here than in any other country in Europe ; while the corruption and insolence of the *employés* do not facilitate the working of a system sufficiently intricate in itself. These clerks are, by virtue of their office, nobles of the fourteenth class, and, as such, think themselves entitled to treat all foreigners as serfs.

A police-office experience at Odessa affords the traveller a pretty correct notion of what he will have to encounter at all the large towns throughout the empire. At the top of a dingy flight of stairs is an antechamber, containing a crowd of bareheaded men and women waiting in the most suppliant manner at a sort of barrier, where two soldiers are placed to prevent indiscriminate intrusion. If the traveller be an Englishman, his resolute appearance daunts these two cerberi, and he passes into an extremely dirty room, where a number of worn-out, ragged-looking men are scribbling in a dejected manner, regardless alike of him or his passport. At last he follows the direction of the point of a pen, and finds himself in a similar room, where the coats of the writers look a little less threadbare ; and here a man seizes the document, and looks

through a pile of portfolios, among which he chooses one, and begins leisurely reading. Our traveller stands patiently waiting the result, which is probably the passing on of the passport to the next writer, who reads it through in rather an interested manner, and hands it back. Meantime the original man has found something in the portfolio, which seems to have some reference to the passport, for he inscribes something thereon, and, giving it to its owner, directs him to another man, who, upon receiving it, makes the government charge, puts it on one side, as if he never meant to look at it again, and goes on attending to numerous other applicants, regardless of the entreaties of his victim, who at last bethinks him of trying the effect of a bribe. This the nobleman complacently pockets, and tells him to come back in three hours. If time is valuable, however, on doubling his bribe the traveller is rejoiced with the sound of "sichass," which, if he has just come to Russia, he will have learnt means literally *immediately*; but if he has remained there any time, he will have discovered that it has practically the opposite signification.

Some time having elapsed, and the same routine having been gone through with three or four more rusty-looking members of the aristocracy, who confer continually with one another, as if his were a most exceptional case, the traveller, in despair, finally refuses to bestow another bribe, and, relinquishing his passport, determines to complain to the governor. This functionary, notwithstanding the fact of his

having amassed considerable wealth by these very means, displays much righteous indignation, and orders an immediate restitution of the passport to the peppery Englishman, who has thus succeeded in scraping through one office in an incredibly short time, and has probably three more in prospect. It thus happened that we were fully occupied during our three days' stay in Odessa with trying to get away from it ; while no doubt the kind exertions in our behalf of the British consul, Mr Yeames, much facilitated our departure.

We had still a voyage in a Russian steamer before us, the next most terrible prospect to a residence in a Russian hotel, as it is always impossible to predicate the length of the voyage. The run to Galatz is usually performed in twenty-four hours ; in that case we expected to find ourselves in the Danube by daylight. At seven o'clock, however, on emerging from an extremely unpleasant cabin, I found that we had cast anchor off the Isle of Serpents, exposed to the violence of an unmerciful sea, on which we tossed and rolled in a way which laid up nearly all the passengers and some of the cabin servants. We were thirty miles from the mouth of the river, and were destined to look at the barren rock before us until the sea should calm or the wind change. Nobody seemed to have heard of the possibility of such an occurrence, which, indeed, could only have happened under the grossest mismanagement. It seems that, during the prevalence of a west wind, there are only

nine feet of water on the bar of the Soulina branch of the Danube. We drew nine and a half, and so were doomed to lie at anchor thirty miles off, until there should be water enough to float us over.

For twenty-four hours, our only consolation consisted in expressing our opinions upon the arrangements which could incur such a misadventure, when the establishment of a smaller steamer on the line would have obviated it at once. The delay of one day which had thus been caused, was sufficient to run out the supply of provisions ; and had the same wind lasted as much longer, we should have returned to Odessa, to satisfy our hunger, absolutely unable to perform our voyage of twenty-four hours.

There is nothing interesting in the first view of the Danube, on the marshy shores of which is situated the unhappy-looking town of Soulina—a veritable American Eden. But the shipping is abundant, and the costume of the crews varied. Though the river is so deep as to render it impossible for us to find a sandbank, we manage cleverly to put one paddle-wheel high and dry on the right shore, which gives us time to look over a vast expanse of bulrushes, and to admire the original manner in which unfortunate crews are obliged to tow up their barks in default of tug-boats, and we sympathise with the roves of Englishmen we see now attached to the tow-rope, after having been always accustomed to have such work done for them.

There was a grand fair going on at the large Bessarabian town of Ismael when we arrived, the third we had witnessed in Russia, and frequented by a population almost equally varied and characteristic with that attending the others. Here quaint covered passages, extemporaneously got up, were crowded with Moldavians, Cossacks, Germans, Bulgarians, Gypsies, Greeks, and Armenians. An infinite quantity of nondescript merchandise loaded the counters, and uncouth garments fluttered overhead. Grapes were piled in heaps at the corners of the streets ; for Bessarabia is a great vine-growing province, and Swiss vine-dressers have emigrated here in numbers. The town of Ismael is mean and straggling, and contains about forty thousand inhabitants ; but it boasts a respectable fortress, numerously garrisoned,—while some gun-boats are anchored under its walls.

The principal port of a very fertile province, Ismael carries on a considerable trade ; but the resources of Bessarabia are but feebly developed, and it is in a far more depressed condition than the neighbouring districts. The Russian political economist contends that this is owing entirely to the abrupt emancipation of all the serfs, and regards the result as a triumphant vindication of the system of serfdom. But a very slight consideration of the circumstances under which this wholesale liberation took place is sufficient to show the unsound nature of the argument, and to prove that a measure, though indis-

putably beneficial in itself, must ever be greatly influenced in its practical effects by the motives which prompt it, and may be so carried out as to produce widely differing results. And where a measure such as this has originated, not in a desire on the part of the government to give freedom to the agricultural population, but to ruin their owners, the Moldavian Boyars, or old landed aristocracy, its wholesome tendency must be to some extent neutralised ; while the mal-administration of the local government, the intrigues and chicanery of the Russian *employés*, and the introduction of the prohibitive system of the empire into a country previously enjoying a liberal commercial policy, form a combination of evil influences more than sufficient to account for the unhappy state of this poverty-stricken province.

It is interesting to observe the present condition of Bessarabia, as affording us some idea of the probable result of the annexation of the Danubian principalities by Russia, should that event ever take place. We have only now to look at the prosperous state of those provinces, as compared with Bessarabia, to perceive how disastrous must be the effects of such an occurrence.

It is not to be wondered at that the inhabitants of Moldavia and Wallachia dread the day when the blighting influence of Russian administration will be extended along the shores of the Danube as far as the Austrian frontier ; for in the past history of

Bessarabia they foresee their own unhappy future. Should the Emperor grant them a constitution, they can compare it with that which Alexander granted to the Boyars of Bessarabia, and need be under no uncertainty as to the extent of its duration. Should he accord them *special privileges*, they will at once be able to estimate them at their true value, to anticipate their fatal effects, and to calculate exactly how long it will be before protection in trade shall reduce them to a state of Bessarabian depression.

CHAPTER XXV.

TRADE OF MOLDAVIA—JEALOUSY OF RUSSIA : HER POLICY WITH
REFERENCE TO THE MOUTHS OF THE DANUBE : ITS EFFECTS
UPON ENGLAND—PROPOSED CANAL FROM RASSOVA TO KUSTENDJI
—GALATZ—THE “BOREAS”—VOYAGE UP THE DANUBE—EXE-
CRABLE ACCOMMODATION—HERR SIPPEN DISTINGUISHES HIMSELF
—WE ARRIVE AT ORSOVA, AND ARE PUT UNDER ARREST—TRIUM-
PHANT RELEASE—THE “LIVRE NOIR.”

FROM Ismael we retraced our steps up the Kilia branch of the Danube, and re-entered the main stream at the picturesque Turkish town of Tultcha. Solitary Cossack guard-houses occur every three versts, almost hidden among the reeds by which they are surrounded. Their sickly-looking occupants crawl out to gaze at the steamer as she passes ; and the dejected sentry is evidently glad of the opportunity thus afforded of presenting arms.

Early in the morning the shallow pools upon the river banks are coated with ice. A week ago we were roasting at Yalta, with the thermometer at 80° in the shade. At last we reached Galatz. I was glad to exchange the ragged Cossack for the slouching Moldavian soldier, who was here perambulating

the quay, and to find that we had passed from the imperial dominions into those of a quasi-independent prince, where I might light a cigar in public with impunity—where there was no examination either of luggage or passports—where, in fact, everything seemed conducted upon most liberal principles.

But though, while in Moldavia, the traveller is released from those annoyances which he anticipates as inevitable, when he remembers that he is surrounded by Russia, Austria, and Turkey, the government does not act with the same liberality towards its own subjects. At present, sufficient facility is not afforded for the exercise of that trade to which Moldavia owes its prosperity, and which should render it one of the richest, as it is one of the most fertile, countries in Europe.

Intersected by noble rivers, it only requires the properly directed skill of the engineer to render them navigable ; blessed with a most magnificent soil, it only awaits the operations of some enterprising capitalist to yield its abundance ; and, in addition to the finest wheat and Indian corn, produce flax and other crops, which have not as yet been even tried.

Again, it appears self-evident that every advantage should be taken of the limited frontage which this country possesses upon the mighty stream by means of which its trade finds vent ; and while the only port of which it can boast is made the emporium of all the produce of the interior, it should

act in a like capacity for the grain of the neighbouring provinces. With an almost incredible blindness, the importation of all foreign corn, even for the purpose of transhipment, is prohibited at Galatz ; and, in consequence of this, Ibraila, a town sixteen miles farther up the river, is increasing with fourfold rapidity, representing a country which extends for more than three hundred miles along the margin of the river ; and the prosperity of Galatz, instead of arising in a great degree from the contiguity of its rich neighbour, is dependent entirely upon the small country at its rear, which, owing to the difficulty of inland transport, and the scarcity of capital and labour, is not in a condition to profit by the richness of the soil.

Just now the most increasing export of the Danubian principalities is Indian corn. An almost entirely new trade has recently sprung up in this article, Ireland having hitherto been the principal consumer. It is evident that these provinces are annually becoming more formidable as rivals to the south of Russia. Wheat exported from the Danube ranks higher, and obtains better prices, in the London market than Polish Odessa ; while there can be no doubt that, if the encouragement hitherto afforded by foreign markets to these provinces be continued, Moldavia, Wallachia, and Roumelia will soon equally divide with Russia the corn trade of the Black Sea.

A full conviction of the ruinous consequences of

such a result to the southern shores of the empire has no doubt operated powerfully in conducing towards the present unjustifiable occupation of the principalities ; and even should the designs of permanent annexation now entertained be frustrated, and an evacuation of these provinces ultimately prove to be inevitable, Russia will be compensated for the inconvenience of the movement by the soothing consciousness that she has retarded for many years the commercial prosperity of her most dreaded rivals.

At present, not the slightest effort is made to improve the navigation of the Danube. Prior to the treaty of Adrianople, the depth of water upon the bar at the mouth of the river was about sixteen feet. There is little more than nine feet of water there now. The bar is formed principally of alluvial deposit, and not of sand washed up by the sea, consequently nothing could be effected more easily than its removal. As, however, it was not stipulated in the treaty of Adrianople upon whom this duty was to devolve, in the year 1840 Austria entered into a convention with Russia, whereby it was agreed that a tax should be levied by this latter power upon all ships entering the river at Soulina ; and, in consideration of this privilege, Russia became bound to keep the mouth of the river free from all such impediments as now exist. Since that period, the tax, which has fallen very heavily upon British ships, has been duly levied ; while not only has the obligation

arising out of it been totally neglected, but it has ever been the end and aim of Russia to allow this channel—which she is not allowed to fortify—to fill up, with a view of forcing the river and the trade through the northern or Kilia branch. This branch was formerly the deepest, and therefore that preferred by ships. In the hands of the Russians it silted up, and the waters thus turned into the Soulina branch, which became the more available. If the Soulina should silt up, it is probable that the Kilia branch would again be opened, and the fortress of Ismael would command the trade of the Danube.

So long as the Soulina mouth was in the possession of Turkey, every vessel leaving the river was compelled to drag a large rake behind her. This was sufficient to stir up the mud, which was thus carried away by the mere force of the current. Since then, vessels have offered to continue this practice, but have been positively prohibited from so doing. Indeed, it is absurd to suppose that Russia will take any steps tending to increase the trade of rival countries, by improving the navigation of the river on which their prosperity depends, simply because she is bound by treaty to do so. The consequence is, that the difficulty of entering the Danube is far greater than it used formerly to be, and numbers of English ships are lost upon the bar every year. But Russia is not satisfied with allowing nature to monopolise the work of destroying Danubian trade; she has raised an artificial

barrier, which is even more ruinous to commerce than that at the mouth of the river. The stringent quarantine regulations which have been imposed by her, render it impossible for the produce of the Turkish provinces to find an outlet in this direction, which is consequently forced, at a needless expense, to Varna and other ports on the Black Sea.

Galatz and Ibraila do not suffer only from the neglect and jealousy of Russia : Austria possesses an entire control over the steam navigation of the river ; and so long as the Danube Steam Navigation Company continues to hold the monopoly it at present exercises, so long will an insurmountable obstacle exist to the increasing prosperity of these provinces, which are thus victimised by their unfortunate position between powers so opposed to a liberal and enlightened commercial system.

But a consideration of the dismal prospect in store for these corn-growing districts, renders it also evident that those countries which are in any degree dependent upon them for grain, are no less affected by the injurious influences at present exercised upon Danubian navigation. If England is ever to be independent of Russia for her annual supply of corn, it is chiefly from the western shores of the Black Sea that she must look to obtaining sufficient to satisfy the ever-increasing demand. There can be no doubt that, if the resources of these provinces were allowed a free development, they would be found adequate to meet that demand ; but if the mouths of the Danube are to be neglected

or blocked up by one power, and the steam navigation monopolised by another, the corn-consuming and corn-producing countries are equally at the mercy of those who, from whatever motive, may be desirous of impeding the important trade at present existing.

It may yet prove necessary, for the interests of Europe, that a canal should be cut from Rassova on the Danube to Kustendji on the Black Sea—a work of great comparative facility, and one which, if properly carried out, would serve a double purpose in removing the line of traffic to a distance from any portion of the Russian frontier; while a circuit of more than two hundred miles, and a great deal of intricate navigation, would be saved by so simple a proceeding. The proposed outlet, which does not exceed forty miles in length, passes chiefly through a highly fertile country.

The day does not seem far distant when new treaties must be entered into with reference to this portion of Europe; and it is to be hoped that then the defects in the treaty of Adrianople will be remedied, and the free and unimpeded navigation of one of the finest rivers in Europe secured to the world.

Galatz is picturesquely situated upon the side of a steep hill rising abruptly from the river's edge. It contains a mixed population, amounting to about thirty thousand inhabitants. There is one establishment here on which the English traveller looks with some interest, when he discovers that it is the pre-

served - meat manufactory which obtained for Mr Goldner so unenviable a notoriety, and which is again being carried on under the superintendence of two Englishmen. There is probably no place in Europe where provisions are cheaper, or the prices paid for labour higher. A silver ruble a-day may frequently be earned by a common porter ; while, after selling the hides and tallow, the meat which was preserved for the benefit of the Admiralty did not cost Mr Goldner more than a halfpenny a pound.

I should not have been so anxious for the arrival of the steamer by which we were destined to ascend the Danube, had I foreseen the discomforts in store for me. In happy ignorance of this, after remaining two days at Galatz, I hailed with delight the intelligence that the steamer had arrived from Vienna, and was already preparing for a return voyage. Meantime, passengers had been accumulating from various directions, and we formed a goodly company on board the "Boreas." The representatives of eleven different nations jostled one another in her crowded saloon, and a Babel of languages resounded throughout the ship from morning till night : the preponderating tongues I discovered to be Greek, Moldavian, Italian, German, French, Russian, and Arabic.

Life on board the Boreas was as different from life on board the Samson as the rivers traversed were dissimilar. On the Volga we reigned supreme, with an affable captain to dine with, and a good-natured old woman to take care of us. On the

Danube we were lost amid a crowd of others, all treated alike contemptuously by the Austrian officer in command, and the Austrian stewards who did us the honour to wait at table.

There is not much to interest on the Danube below the "Iron Gate." As usual, one side monopolises all the beauty; and the picturesque Turkish towns, with their mosques perched upon the steep hill-sides, or peeping out from amid woods and vineyards, cause those passengers, who are susceptible of them, passing emotions.

Few, however, find time or inclination to trouble themselves with the beauties of the river. The system upon which the Danubian Steam Navigation Company's boats are managed, affords ample occupation of another description to those who are unfortunate enough to travel by them. Throughout the voyage there is one continued selfish scramble, and each succeeding day and night is enlivened by the varied and exciting scenes which occur amongst ourselves.

At the Wallachian towns at which we touch, we receive numerous additions to our party, and soon the small triangular cabin, miscalled a saloon, is inconveniently crowded. There are only two or three private cabins to be procured, which are pounced upon at an enormous price, and the weather is far too cold to admit of sleeping on deck. The consequence is, that, as night draws on, preparations for turning in are apparent. Those who wish to secure a few feet

of *infested* sofa, wisely take possession about six o'clock. Those who prefer a cigar in the calm moonlight on deck, may esteem themselves fortunate if, upon going below, they can find an unoccupied space on the floor.

For about two hours the greatest confusion prevails. Everybody is either fighting for his bed, or making it, or snoring in it, such as it is. Some people do not think it necessary to undress at all ; others go to an opposite extreme, and expose themselves to a needless risk of catching cold.

When, having enjoyed the fresh evening air as long as possible, I quit the deck about midnight, I seem to be entering a badly-managed hospital rather than the saloon of a steam-ship. I know my bed is secured to me, because three of us have entered into partnership to watch over one another's interest, and we mount guard alternately. It is not so, however, with my Prussian friend Sippel, a good-natured farmer, whose acquaintance I had first made at Odessa, where he was being victimised in the same police-office with myself,—he now makes a point of always offering me his bed, for he is the most yielding and amiable of men. To-night, however, he finds the corner, to which he supposed he had obtained a prescriptive right, occupied by a burly Austrian, with whom all entreaties and remonstrances seem unavailing. Suddenly we observe our friend stoop down, as if to whisper something into the ear of the usurper ; a moment more, and he has

seized him with a gripe that renders resistance hopeless, and has flung him violently across the cabin. We were wondering at the want of spirit manifested by the large mustached man who had thus been summarily ejected, and were applauding Sippel's energetic behaviour somewhat loudly, when, as if by magic, appear two gendarmes with fixed bayonets by the side of the couch he had so nobly won. A most impressive silence is caused by this apparition, broken only by the snores of those who wish it to be supposed that they have never been awake. Everybody is awestruck but Sippel, who, stretched upon his back, is evidently determined to remain there in spite of the whole Austrian army. However, upon giving up his passport, he is allowed quiet possession, and the gendarmes vanish as suddenly as they had appeared. Though we had been some days on board, we never suspected the existence of these gentry, whose presence amongst an unsuspecting set of travellers was somewhat significant, and people began to speak in suppressed whispers and look mysterious. I was advised to cut Sippel forthwith, but did not follow this well-meant counsel, though many of the other passengers did.

If it was difficult to sleep on board the Boreas, it was still more difficult to wash. The only basin supplied by the company was required at nine o'clock A.M. by the stewards, so that the crockery might be washed in it immediately after the passengers. It

was therefore necessary for some of the party to begin their admissions before day-light—as we had scarcely done fighting for the cabin when we began to fight for places at the breakfast-table; and then the food was so atrocious, that at last, in despair, we determined to commit the audacious proceeding of entering a complaint in the book. Such a piece of hardihood had never been perpetrated before on board the *Boreas*; but as everybody signed the important document except one man, people flattered themselves that there was safety in a multitude. This one exception was a gay young gentleman on his way to Pesth, where he was to be imprisoned for five years, according to his own account; for having talked politics in a café at Bucharest. He was very proud of his notoriety, and gambled incessantly. He was suspected of being a spy; but if he acted in that capacity, his object probably was merely to curry favour with those whom he wished to propitiate.

We had just passed through a severe examination at the Orsova custom-house, which lasted for about three hours, when, a little after midnight, I passed along the quay to return to the steamer in company with a Hungarian noble who had joined us first in the Crimea. He was revisiting his native land after an absence of five years. During this period a terrible change had come over the condition of his unfortunate countrymen; but this was a topic he carefully

avoided discussing; and whatever may have been his feelings upon a subject in which he was so deeply interested, he had seen too much of the world to give vent to them. A few moments ago I fancied, as he indignantly twisted up his long-pointed mustache, that his Magyar blood was rising while he watched the custom-house officials overhaul his wardrobe. And now that the ordeal was over, and we were strolling silently along in the calm still moonlight, I strove to analyse his feelings by imagining what my own would be under similar circumstances, and had just arrived at the conclusion that it was impossible for me to realise sentiments so foreign to the nature of an Englishman, when a remark he made induced me to suppose that his thoughts were running in the same direction. Perhaps it was fancy: but the words had scarcely escaped his lips when we were surrounded by gendarmes; and so sudden and appropriate was their appearance that, as far as my thoughts were concerned, it might have been the effect of clairvoyance. My friend was no less startled than myself at this unexpected reception to his fatherland, and was at first disposed to enter into indignant remonstrance. This was evidently useless, as those by whom he was arrested professed ignorance of his crime, further than that he was the friend of two Englishmen whom they also had orders to arrest. Upon this he was instantly marched off, and I was ordered to return to the steamer and remain there

"until called for." As the police were in possession of our passports, there was nowhere else to go to, and I accordingly carried the agreeable intelligence to my travelling companion and the other passengers, and was in some degree consoled by the panic it created among some of the latter.

People did not seem inclined to sleep much that night as we lay alongside the quay, but envied sundry new arrivals, who came on board and took possession of sofas without opposition, their sound slumbers.

A little before daybreak the Count returned in great triumph. The governor, at whose order he had been arrested, proved to be an old friend and companion-in-arms, who had arrested him upon information, as we inferred, received from the captain and purser. These worthies had taken advantage of our detention at the custom-house to report to the governor, in their capacity of spies, certain political conversations alleged to have been overheard as passing between the Count and ourselves. These conversations the Count assured his Excellency were purely imaginary ; and our friend went on to supply a reason for this piece of malignity, so very probable, that the governor was constrained to believe him. The three names which headed the celebrated manifesto of our grievances on board were, singularly enough, identical with those of the so-called politicians. Our complaints had been so well founded,

and our language so decided to those in authority on board, that they attempted thus to revenge themselves, and would no doubt have succeeded in causing us to be arrested had not this lucky friendship subsisted.

A slight revulsion of feeling, however, was created when it was whispered, upon undoubted authority, that the whole ship-load of passengers were inscribed in the "Livre noir" as suspected persons ; that, in fact, we were looked upon as a most factious and rebellious crew, maintaining opinions calculated to subvert the empire, because we objected to remaining on board a government steamer for more than a week without washing.

CHAPTER XXVI.

ORSOVA — ITS POLITICAL ASSOCIATIONS — EFFECTS OF RUSSIAN AGGRESSION IN THE WEST UPON GREAT BRITAIN, AS COMPARED WITH OTHER EUROPEAN COUNTRIES — THE TRADITIONARY POLICY OF THE EMPIRE SUCCESSFUL, AND RUSSIA MISTRESS OF THE DARDANELLES — RESULTS OF A DOMINANT INFLUENCE OVER TURKEY UPON THE REST OF EUROPE.

THE scenery at Orsova is very fine. Here the Danube seems to have gathered up its mighty forces, and burst a passage through the rocky barrier which composes the Iron Gate. Sweeping past the walls of the little town, the river expands into a noble reach ; and from the eddying waters rise the quaint turreted battlements of an island fortress, where tapering minarets tell of a mosque embowered amid the poplars and cypresses which adorn it. On either side lofty cliffs frown upon the picturesque old castle. An inconsiderable brook flows into the Danube a little below the island ; and beneath the range in which it takes its rise, nestle the white houses of Orsova. But though forming part of the finest river-scenery in Europe, the intrinsic merits of the landscape do not now claim our attention, but

rather the associations connected with it, and which are absorbing to the whole civilised world.

The island fortress once contained a Turkish garrison. The cliffs on the south are the highlands of Servia ; the little stream opposite is the Bagna which separates Wallachia from Austria ; and the mountain range from which it issues is *the present limit of Russian aggression*.

The island may soon prove a stepping-stone for her troops to invade a province which they have never yet occupied ; and the prospect which Muscovite soldiers now obtain from those mountain-tops may serve as a stimulus, such as they already experienced when, surmounting the steep passes of the Caucasus, they first gazed on the sunny countries lying stretched at their feet.

Only sixty years ago the most westerly point of the Russian empire was still two hundred miles from the Austrian frontier ; at present the Russian and Austrian frontiers are conterminous for a distance of five hundred miles ; and if Russia be allowed to complete her long-cherished designs upon the Danubian principalities, that extent will be doubled, and for a distance of one thousand miles, or more than one-third of its entire circumference, will Russia clasp in one giant embrace an empire of magnitude scarcely equal to that enormous territory of Poland which the last half century has seen absorbed within her vast dominions. Hitherto Russia has possessed only the swampy delta

of the Danube, and her frontier is conterminous with that of Turkey in Europe for about eighty miles ; but, if the contemplated annexation takes place, it will extend along the shores of that river for nearly five hundred miles to this little town of Orsova ; and her acquisitions from Turkey since the treaty of Kainardji, in 1774, will comprise a greater extent of territory than all that remains in Europe of the ill-fated empire from which they have been successively wrested.

These are facts which a mere glance at the map will confirm. They are the apparent and undoubted results of the fulfilment of those designs which are now openly avowed by Russia—which have been entertained in the deliberate prosecution of a policy which, through a long course of years, has never been changed, for it has been invariably successful—but which, though scarce heeded in its earlier stages, has now assumed a character calculated to fill all Europe with dismay.

In the violence of that universal agitation which the present aspect of the Eastern question has excited, the entire Continent seems to be united in impressing upon Great Britain the fact, that the interests which she has at stake are more vitally concerned than those of any other nation ; and the English public, as if glorying in the unenviable distinction, at once appropriate the position thus anxiously conceded. Having agreed, however, to mono-

polise the lion's share of the evil consequences which must result from Russian aggression, their unanimity ceases ; and while the Peace party, on the one hand, indignantly assert that the "domestic" interests involving the commercial prosperity of Great Britain are paramount to all others, the War party, on the other hand, insist no less earnestly that a peace, enjoyed at the expense of Turkish independence, will be attended with consequences infinitely more disastrous to ourselves than to our continental neighbours. The importance of this question to England is not to be disputed ; but to contend that, because she is the only nation in Europe possessing an Indian Empire and an extensive Black Sea trade, therefore she is the only power interested in maintaining the integrity of the Ottoman Power, is almost as absurd as to say that, because she possesses the largest mercantile marine in the world, therefore she need not stir in the matter at all, but may calmly contemplate a struggle by which her commercial operations will be seriously retarded.

It must ever be most injurious to our own country to exaggerate her stake in the eyes of Europe, and, by giving an undue prominence to those interests of hers which will be the most deeply affected by the solution of the Eastern problem, to cause the task of solving it to devolve chiefly upon her. A very cursory examination of the facts will, I think, tend to show how mate-

rially other nations are affected by a question so essentially European.

The history of Europe for the last century testifies, that upon six previous occasions has Turkey been despoiled by Russia of as many separate portions of her dominions ; and we have only to examine a little more narrowly the system which Russia has pursued in her encroachments, not only upon Turkey, but upon Persia, to discover that her present designs are dictated by the same policy which has ever guided her cabinet ; to perceive, in fact, that it is not by actual conquest only that Russia may subvert the independence of nations, and convert their resources to her own use, but that she seeks rather to govern them through their natural rulers, till the time shall have arrived for annexing them to her dominions ; and by pressing her influence upon their weakness until it becomes paramount, succeed in establishing an *imperium in imperio*.

It is not now a question of the conquest of Turkey physically :—*that* is not yet contemplated. It is not necessary for Russian troops to garrison Constantinople, in order to secure the passage of the Dardanelles to a Russian fleet ; and the right of way through the Bosphorus will be held by a tenure perfectly in accordance with the designs of the Czar, so soon as the Sultan officiates as his janitor. The artfully contrived plan by which he hoped to effect this darling project has just been developed, and

Europe is now called upon to check, before it be too late, the last of a series of encroachments which have been surely, but fatally, sapping the foundations of Ottoman independence : for the long-cherished schemes of Russia are almost realised ; her traditional policy may again be crowned with success, and a dominant influence obtained over Turkey by means of a succession of petty robberies, none of which has been of sufficient importance to rouse Europe to a sense of its insecurity, or to call forth the indignation of a Continent upon this power, so inexhaustible in its intrigues, so insatiable in its demands, so unscrupulous in its designs, and so indefatigable in their execution.

Let Russia once become mistress of the Dardanelles, and the advantages of her position are incalculable. The means of internal communication throughout the empire would be improved, and its vast military and naval resources concentrated upon Constantinople with a rapidity which cannot now be conceived, when the same inducement does not exist for facilitating the conveyance of the material of the army to any given point. The noble rivers flowing into the Black Sea, by which the empire is intersected, would now become available, and Russia, secure behind a barricade where the application of engineering skill has improved natural advantages such as do not exist elsewhere in the world, would maintain within this impregnable posi-

tion such a force as would insure to her the command of the Mediterranean, and invest her with the supreme control of the destinies of Europe. Who, then, will pretend that England alone is vitally affected by Russian aggression ?

I have already alluded to the position of Austria in the event of the annexation of the Danubian principalities. It is easy to see how she would be affected by the next step of Muscovite progress in the west. If the resources of Turkey in Europe were available to Russia, the Austrian empire, in a military point of view, would become indefensible ; and, composed of so many heterogeneous and even hostile nationalities, could exist only as a dependency of Russia. And if, therefore, the spirit of freedom were to kindle afresh in Austria or Italy, Russia could turn the scale in favour of despotism, as she has already done, and quench for ever any spark of liberty still smouldering in those unhappy countries. It were easy for Spain to call in to the support of oppression a similar force.

The next revolution in France would see Italy occupied by Russian troops, reinforcing those of dependent Austria—would see Sardinia crushed, and the Russians again driving the French eagle over the Alps. In every civil commotion that might occur, the shores of the Mediterranean would be as open to invasion as the banks of the Rhine, and Algeria would be lost. The mere knowledge that the whole

military and naval power of Russia, Turkey, and Austria could be brought to bear in one united mass upon any point to which the will of one man might direct it, would change the whole relations of parties in France and in every other country, and would give an inevitable preponderance to that party whose cause he should espouse. Prussia and the minor states of Germany could then offer no effectual resistance, either to the arms or the influence of the Colossus ; and if the revolutions of the wheel of fortune—the lottery of political changes—should place a creature of Russia on the throne of France, England alone, of all the nations of Europe, could hope to maintain her independence. We have already seen one man exercise a dominant influence over the whole Continent of Europe, whose birth and original status in society gave no warrant for anticipating so marvellous a destiny. Should a similar power again be vested in one man, it will be under circumstances less extraordinary, but scarcely less appalling ; for the thrones of continental Europe would be occupied by tyrants dependent on the omnipotent will of one who would have at his disposal an immense army, and a perfect facility for conveying it to any country where freedom still struggled for existence. And when this principle is at stake, it is not for England to remain a passive spectator while justice is trampled on, and liberty is crushed so that it may never rise again, because she cannot afford to see consols at 90.

May it be in defence of a noble cause that she now takes up arms, if a peaceful solution of the difficulty should prove impossible! And then, if she magnify the interest at stake, and appropriate it to herself, it will be because this country alone has the love of freedom at heart, since she alone has experienced its blessed influences.

THE END.



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